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the american musical

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THE B.F.R

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BRIGHTON CLIPS

*The University Lecture series on "Politics, Iconography and Film" scheduled to run until the end of the Summer Term has now got under way with an Introductory Lecture and the screening of POTEMKIN. The BFR naturally welcomes this none too early interest in the cinema on the part of the University, since the cinema at Susses (as a 'respectable' field of enquiry) has hitherto fared no better than at other British universities.

Mr. Keward, one of the lecturers responsible for organizing the course, was kind enought to let us publish his lecture notes. We thought it would serve those of our readers who are thinking of attending further meetings (every Tuesday, 11.30 a.m. A2) as a basis of discussion of some of the issues involved. As the course is on the whole conceived by (and for) historians, for whom the cinema represents an ancillary source of historical material (as Mr. Kedward points out, until now regarded with great skepticism by them), it is not surprising to find the emphasis placed on the sociological aspect of the medium, albeit a sociology that wants to operate with more subtle concepts that has hitherto been the case. However, it seems a pity that both introductory speakers made it somehow understood that they did not want to be drawn into an 'aesthetic' debate about the cinema as artistic form. But surely if the semiological concept of 'iconography' in the title is to be taken seriously it must lead to the recognition that the meaning - even on a primary level of intelligiblity - of a film, whether documentary or feature film, cannot be discussed independently of the various syntactical mechanisms that generate meaning in the cinema. For example, every film, however "documentary", has a narrative structure which is itself fraught with a specific significance and contains a host of a-priori assumptions. Likewise, the ability of a director to relativize and undercut the apparently predefined value or concept embodied in an icon can hardly be over-rated in its importance. It is the ommission of this factor that, in the case of the American cinema, has led to so many misunderstandings and earned Hollywood the generally low esteem that its products still incur among educated audiences. We hope that the debates and discussions which are to form an integral part of the film-showings will give due emphasis to problems of this kind. Mr. Kedward has promised to write at a later stage about certain aspects in more detail, once the course has brought some of the issues into the open.

*The BRIGHTON FILM THEATRE, has a varied programme for March, with quite a number of interesting features, whether by accident or by design is still difficult to tell. Apart from the debatable Lumet (THE PAWNBROKER), the American cinema has not made it this month, though there are a few compensations. A late-night Bergman season will start this month, to be continued for several more. Two Eisenstein: STRIKE and POTEMKIN, in Lenin's honour (it's he, not the Revolution - as stated in the programme - that has a centenary).

*This issue of the BFR has several articles on the American musical. The recent series of musicals on BBC, the regular copilation programmes at the NFT with Philip Jenkinson ('Evolution of the Musical') made it seem a good idea to stress the artistic aspect, as against the historical and technical, and to examine two of the directors who have virtually dominated the post-WW II musical and in many ways defined the scope of themes that seem most closely related to the nature of the genre. Paradoxically, this seemingly so irresponsible of cinematic entertainment, commonly devoted merely to fabricating pleasing illusions, lends itself better than any other genre, to a reflection about the cinema itself. Its deliberate artificiality, its frequent use of the theatrical stage, makes the musical a kind of metaworld between art and life, between spectacle and social reality. Perhaps our articles will induce a few people to go to the Duke of York's and have a look at Donen's SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS, who would normally not have bothered.

****

minnelli

Cont. from p.22

As his isolation grows, the yellow colours of a superhuman light invade the canvass. But here Minnelli confronts a dilemma that transcends the framework of Hollywood, namely that of the morality of art itself. What are the values it creates, whom does it serve and to what ends?

If these questions receive an ambivalent answer in Minnelli's films, where the artist finally redeems and justifies his trespass on 'life', it is partly because for Minnelli the artist is not privileged in either status or sensibility. All those who are capable of experiencing existence by its intensity ('why must life be always measured by its duration?' - this complaint of Deborah Kerr in TEA AND SYMPATHY is symptomatic) and have the courage of their inspiration are artists in Minnelli's films, whether creative in an accepted sense or not.

It is when dealing with the 'real' artist, as in LUST FOR LIFE that the question of the value of ordinary life becomes problematic, and in TWO WEEKS IN ANOTHER TOWN (or Hollywood in exile) the demonic element in the Shields-Van Gogh personality is portrayed as unambiguously neurotic and incapable of dealing with his life. Through Jack Andrus (all three characters are significantly played by the same actor - Kirk Douglas) Minnelli insists above all on the human price to be paid for the artist's venture. For in this film, the 'art' is shown to be inept, and the society is simply decadent. The assertive energy which in the early films mediated the rupture is explicitly and nostaligically evoked by Minnelli quoting his own THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL. A feeling of guilt and failure, by contrast, always makes reality seem apocalyptic. In TWO WEEKS it is the spectacle in its corrupt form (one director taking over from another, everyone working behind one another's back) that comes to dominate, and the actor, instead of being the force that precariously balances two mutually complementary orders of reality, is a schizophrenic, just released from a mental hospital. Although the film in the end appears to suggest the possibility of a new start, this is both a return and an escape, and the issue is finally left open. What weighs, however, more heavily, is the 'death' of the director in the film - Minnelli's alter ego - whose once creative vision has turned into a morbid and self-destructive introspection, to to which he finally succumbs. Minnelli's last completed film, THE SANDPIPER is in this sense wholly retrospective. It tries to recall a world of harmony in which Minnelli himself seems to believe only hesitantly. In the meantime, ON A CLEAR DAY YOU CAN SEE FOREVER ...

T.E.

FILM DIARY

TIMES WHERE SHOWN ARE OF LAST COMPLETE PERFORMANCE. PROGRAMME DETAILS ARE LIABLE TO CHANGE.

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+ PREVIEWED OR REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE.

Mon. Mar. 2nd.

HERE IS YOUR LIFE (Sweden'66) J.Troll	B.F.T. 8.30
THE FANTASTIC VOYAGE (USA '67) R. Fleischer	Univ. A2 7.pm.
THE GRADUATE (USA '68) M.Nichols	Classic 8.50
+ THE KNACK (GB '64) R.Lester	Classic 7.10
MON AMOUR, MON AMOUR (France '69) N.Trintignant	Continentale 7.29
THE VIRGIN SOLDIERS (GB '69) J.Gold	Vogue
SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS (USA '54) S.Donen	Duke of Yorks

Tues. Mar. 3rd.

CHAPAYEV (USSR '34) The Vassielev Brothers	Univ. A2 11.30am.
LOLITA (USA '61) S.Kubrick	Coll Ed. 7pm.
BEHOLD A PALE HORSE (USA '63) F.Zinneman	ITV LONDON
HERE IS YOUR LIFE	B.F.T.
THE GRADUATE	Classic
+ THE KNACK	Classic
MON AMOUR, MON AMOUR	Continentale
THE VIRGIN SOLDIERS	Vogue

Weds. Mar. 4th.

HALLEJUAH THE HILLS (USA '63) J.Mekas	Suss. Film Soc 4 + 7
HERE IS YOUR LIFE	B.F.T.
THE GRADUATE	Classic
+ THE KNACK	Classic
MON AMOUR, MON AMOUR	Continentale
THE VIRGIN SOLDIERS	Vogue
SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS	Duke of Yorks

Thurs. Mar. 5th.

+ ARTISTS AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP (W.Germany '68)A.Kluge	B.F.T. 8.30
JANE EYRE (USA '44) [illegible]Stevenson	Orion 8.23
THE GRADUATE	Classic
+ THE KNACK	Classic
MON AMOUR, MON AMOUR	Continentale
THE VIRGIN SOLDIERS	Vogue
SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS	Duke of Yorks

Frid. Mar. 6th.

+ KANAL (Poland '56) A.Wajda	Vogue 11pm.
BEFORE THE REVOLUTION (Italy '64) B.Bertolucci	BBC 2
+ ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP	B.F.T.
THE GRADUATE	Classic
+ THE KNACK	Classic
MON AMOUR, MON AMOUR	Continentale
THE VIRGIN SOLDIERS	Vogue

Sat. Mar. 7th.

+ PORT OF CALL (Sweden '48) I.Bergman	B.F.T. 11pm.
THE STRANGE DOOR (USA '51) J.Pevney	ITV London
THE GRADUATE	Classic
+ THE KNACK	Classic
MON AMOUR, MON AMOUR	Continentale
THE VIRGIN SOLDIERS	Vogue
SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS	Duke of Yorks

Sun. Mar. 8th.

A SONG TO REMEMBER (USA '45) C. Vidor	BBC1
+ STRIKE (Russia '24) S.Eisenstein	BFT 7.00
PETULIA (G.B '69) C. Donner	Classic 7.10
IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT (U.S.A '68) N. Jewison	Embassy 7.00
WEE WILLIE WINKIE (U.S.A '37)	BBC1

Mon. Mar. 9th.

+ DUET FOR CANNIBALS (Sweden '69) S.Sontag	B.F.T. 8.30
THE GAME IS OVER (France '66) R. Vadim	Orion 7.00

Tues. Mar 10th.

ZERO DE CONDUITE (FRANCE '33) J. Vigo	Univ.A.2. 11.30 a.m.
BARBARELLA (France '67) R. Vadim	Coll.Ed. 7.p.m.
KISS THEM FOR ME (USA '57) S. Domen	B.B.C.1.
LONELY ARE THE BRAVE (USA '62) D. Miller	B.B.C.2.
+ DUET FOR CANNIBALS	B.F.T.
PETULIA	Classic
IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT	Embassy
THE GAME IS OVER	Orion

Wed. Mar. 11th.

+ LE CRIME DE M. LANGE (France '35) J. Renoir	Suss. Film Soc. 4 + 7.
CHINA (France '69) C. Marker	Suss. Film Soc.
+ DUET FOR CANNIBALS	B.F.T.
PETULIA	Classic
IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT	Embassy
THE GAME IS OVER	Orion

Thurs. Mar. 12th.

DILLINGER IS DEAD (It. '69) M. Ferreri	B.F.T. 8.30.
+ SUNSET BOULEVARD (USA '50) B. Wilder	Suss. Film Soc. 6.30.
PETULIA	Classic

Fri. Mar. 13th.

+ ASHES AND DIAMONDS (Pol.'58) A. Wajda	Vogue 11.p.m.
PETULIA	Classic
DILLINGER IS DEAD	B.F.T

Sat. Mar. 14th.

+ SUMMER INTERLUDE (Sw.'51) I. Bergman	B.F.T. 11.p.m.
WARNING SHADOW (Ger.'22) Robison	New Suss. F.G. 8.p.m.
DILLINGER IS DEAD	B.F.T
PETULIA	Classic

Sun. Mar. 15th.

THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN (USSR '25) S. Eisenstein	B.F.T. 7.30.
+ THE YOUNG LIONS (USA '58) E. Dmytryk	Embassy 7.19.
+ THE PROFESSIONALS (USA '66) R. Brooks	Vogue
MIDNIGHT COWBOY (USA '69) J. Schlesinger	Odeon Lewes

Mon. Mar. 16th.

THE PAWNBROKER (USA '64) S. Lumet	B.F.T. 8.30.
FUNNY GIRL (USA '68) W. Wiler	Orion
+ THE PROFESSIONALS	Vogue
+ THE YOUNG LIONS	Embassy
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Odeon Lewes.

Tues. Mar. 17th.

ZORBA THE GREEK (USA '65) M. Cacoyannis	Coll.Ed. 7.p.m
TO DIE IN MADRID (France '64) F. Ressif	Univ. A.2. 11.30. a.m.
THE PAWNBROKER	B.F.T.
+ THE YOUNG LIONS	Embassy
+ THE PROFESSIONALS	Vogue
FUNNY GIRL	Orion
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Odeon Lewes.

Wed. Mar. 18th.

SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT (Pol.'64) W. Has	Suss.Film Soc. 6.30.
THE PAWNBROKER	B.F.T.
+ THE YOUNG LIONS	Embassy
+ THE PROFESSIONALS	Vogue
FUNNY GIRL	Orion
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Odeon Lewes

Thurs. Mar. 19th.

+ GOTO, ISLAND OF LOVE (Fr.'69) V. Borowsczyk	B.F.T. 8.30.
GOODBYE CHARLIE (USA '64) V. Minelli	Suss. Film Soc 6.30.
+ THE PROFESSIONALS	Vogue
FUNNY GIRL	Orion
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Odeon Lewes.

Fri. Mar. 20th.

+ THE LADY VANISHES(G.B.'38) A. Hitchcock	Vogue 11.p.m.
+ GOTO	B.F.T.
+ THE PROFESSIONALS	Vogue
FUNNY GIRL	Orion
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Odeon Lewes

Sat. Mar. 21st.

+ NOW ABOUT THESE WOMEN (Sw.'64) I. Bergman	B.F.T. 11.p.m.
+ GOTO	B.F.T.
+ THE PROFESSIONALS	Vogue
FUNNY GIRL	Orion
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Odeon Lewes

Sun. Mar. 22nd.

+ THE BRIDE WORE BLACK (Fr.'68) F. Truffaut	Continentale 8.30.
PERSONA (Sw. '65) I. Bergman	Continentale 7.0.
DEAR JOHN (Sw. '64) L. Lindnigren	B.F.T. 7.30.

Mon. Mar. 23rd.

MIDNIGHT COWBOY (USA '69) J. Schlesinger	Orion
THE PARTY (USA '67) B. Edwards	Orion
+ THE BRIDE WORE BLACK	Continentale
PERSONA	Continentale

Tues. Mar. 24th.

+ THE BRIDE WORE BLACK	Continentale
PERSONA	Continentale
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Orion
THE PARTY	Orion

Wed. Mar. 25th.

+ THE BRIDE WORE BLACK	Continentale
PERSONA	Continentale
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Orion
THE PARTY	Orion

Thurs. Mar. 26th.

+ THE BRIDE WORE BLACK	Continentale
PERSONA	Continentale
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Orion
THE PARTY	Orion

Fri. Mar. 27th.

+ THE BRIDE WORE BLACK	Continentale
PERSONA	Continentale
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Orion
THE PARTY	Orion

Sat. Mar. 28th.

SAWDUST AND TINSEL (Sw. '53) I. Bergman	B.F.T. 11.p.m.
+ THE BRIDE WORE BLACK	Continentale
PERSONA	Continentale
MIDNIGHT COWBOY	Orion
THE PARTY	Orion

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PREVIEWS

THE FAMILY JEWELS (USA '65) Jerry Lewis; Jerry Lewis
Donna Peyton

The oevre of Lewis demonstrates a continual preoccupation with children: his heroes are, in effect, children thrown into a merciless adult world. But Lewis admires the qualities of children, their innocence, their spontaneity, their intuitive ability to distinguish between honesty and falsity - thus, his films are often the personification of what Gérard Recassens (Editions Seghers, No.59) has called 'l'univers naif, pur,et ethere de l'enfance'. Nowhere is this more apparent than in THE FAMILY JEWELS: the young girl, Donna Butterworth, chooses her chauffeur Willard (Lewis) as her tutor, rather than any of her six uncles (also all played by Lewis, in various disguises), because he alone possesses the quality of pure honesty. Although he is an adult, Donna recognizes in him a kindred spirit - he is able to enter into the world of her imagination. In contrast to Willard, who is in fact first seen in the movie entering into a game of baseball with some children, the six uncles patronize Donna, assuming roles of grotesque benevolence in order to please her. And although Lewis does not postulate the spirit of infancy as an ideal solution (cf. THREE ON A COUCH) because he cannot finally endorse the moral abdication it implies in an adult world, he regards it paradoxically, as an integral characteristic of maturity. Ultimately, Lewis, like Donen and Blake Edwards before him, exhorts us all to be natural.

Thurs. Mar. 5th 4 + 7 U. of S. Film Soc. A.2. P.L.

PORT OF CALL (Sweden '48) Ingmar Bergman; Nine-Christine Jonsson, Bergt Eklund.

Made in 1948, PORT OF CALL is concerned with two young people, Gösta and Berit, who are attracted to one another, and form a mutual alliance against the pressures of the adult world. The movie shares the deficiences of Bergman's earliest work, such as CRISIS or IT RAINS ON OUR LOVE: extreme didacticism, a self-absorbed claustraphobia, and an atmosphere of largely facile pessimism, which ultimately negates itself. The pretentiousness of PORT OF CALL is exposed when one compares it to a movie that Bergman made two years earlier, on a similar theme, the mature, lyrical SUMMER INTERLUDE.

Sat. Mar. 7th. 11.00. B.F.T. P.L.

NOW ABOUT THESE WOMEN (Sweden '64) Ingmar Bergman; Jarl Kulle, Eva Dahlbeck.

With the exception of Ian Cameron's perceptive analysis in Movie 13, a film greeted with blank incomprehension by both critics and public. Bergman has here succeeded in producing what is essentially a perverse film; his only film in colour, but also a film which masquerades as comedy, but whose brittle mise-en-scene disguises a profound concern with the artist and his public.

For Bergman, victim more than most of critical vacillation, everything about Cornelius, the music critic who arrives at the stately home of Felix the cellist ostensibly to write his 'biography', is visible. The elaborate charades performed by him gradually reveal his true mature, dishonest, opportunist, blackmailer, a parasite on the talents and the success of the artist. But Felix is not allowed to compromise his art, by playing Cornelius' dreadful compositions in order that he may secure himself a niche in posterity via the biography; at this moment he dies, physical death following immediately his moral decline. Bitter beneath the flippancy, NOW ABOUT THESE WOMEN is a movie that ultimately falls between two stools. Conceived as a 'divertissement' on the nature of criticism one senses Bergman's growing commitment. The result is a serious but flawed film on the sanctity of the artist, and the discrepancy between his private life and public image.

Sat. Mar 21st. B.F.T. 11.00. P.L.

SUNSET BOULEVARD (USA '50) Billy Wilder; William Holden
Gloria Swanson

Too often, Wilder's cynicism becomes naively vulgar because he supposes it to justify itself. In his better work (of which SUNSET BOULEVARD is a fine example) the narrative - here concerning the fatal relationship between a penniless scriptwriter and a silent-era star attempting to make a glorious come-back under the direction of De Mille - is able to absorb the director's misanthropic stance. SUNSET BOULEVARD contains an extraordinary acting performance by Gloria Swanson, and allied to her is Wilder's perceptive vision of a fading Hollywood. The delicacy with which he handles the final scene, with Swanson, by now insane, descending the staircase of her house into the battery of T.V. cameras, demonstrates just how good a director Wilder might be.

Thurs. March 12th. U.o.S.Film Soc. A.2. 6.30. P.L.

DUET FOR CANNIBALS (Sweden '69) Susan Sontag, Lars Ekborg

Susan Sontag's first attempt at breaking into films takes the form of a journey behind the established facade of marriage where predatory instincts prevail universally. The plot is similar to Vadim's LES LIASONS DANGEREUSES, where one couple act as manipulators and another as their victims. Sympathy for individual characters is sacrificed in preference to general comment on the implications of their situation, just as the distortions of reality and illusion, interwoven in such a complex fashion as to be indistinguishable, serve to undermine the area of escape in domestic inertia. DUET FOR CANNIBALS lacks the consistent truculence of WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF, and instead wallows in self-indulgent permissive gestures such as sinister party games, vomiting and abject sexuality.

Mon. Mar. 9 - 11th B.F.T. 8.30. C.L.

GOTO, L'ILE D'AMOUR (Poland '69) Walerian Borowizyk; Ligia Brance.

Borowizyk is noted for his static camera which can supply benevolent fantasy as in LES ASTRONAUTES or correspondingly expose malevolent voyeurism as in GAVOTTE or JEUT DES ANGES. His latest film, GOTO, L'ILE D'AMOUR, extends this idea of voyeurism without its emphatic asperity, particularly noticeable in the scene where the Governor's garrison surveys the menial work of the island's occupants through binoculars and later again when binoculars become the instrument through which Glossia's adultery is discovered. Built around a conception of totalitarian existence (organised brothels for sexual needs, humans aligned with insects, the collective supervision of the population) the situation in GOTO is developed through the individual beauty of Glossia, the Governor's wife, and her relationship with Lieutenant Gono, in contrast to the ritualistic isolation and unreality of the

island itself. The conclusion is focused on her dead body, where as her eyes flicker momentarily, Borowczyk seems to be emphasising that beauty is preserved in death and in spite of the atmosphere of the island and its dehumanising properties.

Thurs. Mar. 19th - 21st. B.F.T. 8.30. C.L.

STRIKE (USSR '24) S.Eisenstein

Eisenstein's first full-length film, STRIKE portrays the course of a factory dispute in Tsarist Russia. At first the striking succeed in closing their factory but hunger and the brutality of the imported Cossacks breaks the strike and drives the workers back to work.

Slow and ponderous in its development, STRIKE is notable for the balletic intensity of the set piece scenes and the first working out of Eisenstein's dialectic concept of editing.

Sun. Mar. 8th. 7.p.m. B.F.T. G.J.

KANAL (Poland '56)
ASHES AND DIAMONDS (Poland '58) A. Wajda.

The second and third in Wajda's trilogy on the Polish underground in World War II. Showing a deepening in complexity from the simple "party line" verities of A GENERATION, they each illustrate not only a historical concept but also the deepening contradictions of life in the Communist Poland of the 50's.

KANAL telling the story of the escape of guerilla fighters from encircled Warsaw through the sewer system is almost unbearable in its claustrophobic intensity.

ASHES AND DIAMONDS describing the moral bewilderment of a young member of a right wing terrorist group sent to assassinate a leading Communist is the best known and perhaps the most accessible to western audiences of the three films, renowned for the debut of Zbigniew Cybulski the personification of the baffled petit bourgeois studentist bouncing like a cork on the waves of the class struggle.

KANAL Fri. Mar. 6th Vogue 11.o.
A. and D. Fri. Mar. 13th Vogue 11.0. G.J.

THE KNACK (G.B.'65) R. Lester

Amazing how quickly "Swinging England" has aged and darkened. What was quite a bold film in 1966 with its overtones of sexual permissiveness and anarchism, seems now a rather charming fairytale suitable for putting on for second formers as light relief from the films on the sex and drug scene. Colin's problems in making girls and his daydreams of Tolen's myriad successes are nicely counterpointed by the essential innocence of Tom.

Lester's affectations date less than one might have expected and the whole film has a rather appealing kind of sunny innocence.

Sun. Mar. 1st - 7th. Classic 7.00. G.J.

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THE KILLERS (USA '64) D. Siegel

"The danger was that I would have two Lee Marvins walking through the picture, both very, very tough. But I thought, there's nobody as tough as Lee Marvin and Clu Gulager is a real kook of a guy. So I got the idea, which he really went for and Lee Marvin was very generous in putting up with it. I made Clu totally irresponsible and quite crazy, not tough in the way that Lee was but, perhaps, more chilling. You thought you'd be able to reason with Lee Marvin but you'd never be able to reason with Clu. I got an enormous satisfaction out of Clu Gulager's performance, more than anything else in the picture. I'm sorry to say that Clu was born under the same ugly star as I was. Apparently it didn't do him any good.

In the version that I wrote, I had the idea with the sunglasses. I didn't want to caricature the other version of THE KILLERS, so I wanted my killers to be well-dressed and look just like Madison Avenue guys at the Black Tower at Universal. They looked good. I didn't want them to look like thugs.

I'm quite sure that in some way I was influenced by television, by the recognition that I had to be tight in most things, that the long shots would have very little value. But I shot it as a feature. I shot it in the style that I feel is my style at its best, very taut and lean, with great economy. If I had to do it over I don't think I would change much."

From an interview with Don Siegel in 'Movie' 15.

THE LADY VANISHES (G.B. '38) A. Hitchcock

Long regarded as one of Hitchcock's best pictures, perhaps because it is the nearest Hitchcock ever got to making an Ealing comedy! May Whitty is an apparently harmless old lady (in reality a counter-espionage agent) who disappears on a train journey; Margaret Lockwood and Michael Redgrave set themselves the task of finding her. By comparison with THE THIRTY NINE STEPS and THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH the suspense is more intricate and the plot more purposefully worked out, but the emphasis on bizarre details at the expense of psychological depth links the picture with its successor, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT ('40) rather than with the more complex later work, beginning with SUSPICION.('41) Minor Hitchcock then, but enjoyable all the same.

Fri. Mar. 20th. Vogue 11.00 O.G.

LE CRIME DE M. LANGE (France '35) Jean Renoir

The film is a very successful integration of Renoir's central preoccupation: the revolt of the imagination becoming a social revolt of political importance - as always seen as 'criminal' by the social system.

In the story of M. Lange, aimiable hack of Western socials working for a ruthless and smooth publisher, Renoir dramatizes some essential socialist problems of the period in which the film was made: capitalist 'patriarchal' system vs workers' control, division of manual and intellectual labour. First a frustrated writer who spends his time practising lassoo tricks on his bedpost, M. Lange suddenly knows popular fame with 'Arizona Jim'. He becomes the hero of the proto-socialist community that forms itself after the publisher's departure. But the latter comes back and symbolically M. Lange/Arizona Jim 'saves' the community by becoming a criminal, a hunted 'outlaw'. A highly ironic reflection on the hero in the modern world. The metaphoric structure is very suggestive: note the dialectic between laundry and printing-press, between white and black and the way this is related to the moral problems.

Wed. Mar.11th Suss. Film Soc. 4 + 7. T.E.

THE YOUNG LIONS (USA '58) E. Dmytryk

THE YOUNG LIONS is typical of a later generation of war pictures: in which the emphasis shifts from the collective predicament to the moral dilemmas of individuals within the military system. The usual national divisions are broken down by using Marlon Brando as a German officer - in theory, intelligent casting, but in practice a rather disastrous decision. Dmytryk's handling of the American half of the picture, in which Montgomery Clift is persecuted by an officer and by other men in his unit is outstandingly good: but the unity of the picture is destroyed as Brando camps it up in Swastikaland. Doubtless Brando is a difficult actor to direct but Dmytryk must be held responsible for the failure to achieve a satisfactory integration of the two stories. Nevertheless, there are some fine moments - the scene in which Clift's superior officer is dismissed shows that Dmytryk's best is very very good just as his worst is ... well, go see the picture for yourself.

Sun. Mar. 15th - 18th Embassy 7.19. O.G.

SUMMER INTERLUDE (Sweden '50) Ingmar Bergman

An ageing actress is one day brought the diary of a man with whom, years ago, she had spent a summer on an island, during which the man was accidentally killed. After reading his deary she decides to make a return visit to the island, symbolically confronting what hitherto she had suppressed. By reliving the hopes and the happiness associated with INTERLUDE she comes to a more tragic but less desperate sense of her own life.

The film is among the best of Bergman's early works and it contains a good number of his constant thematic motifs - the actor vis a vis an emotional experience, the island as the possibility of a life outside society - here as in HOUR OF THE WOLF used to suggest an essentially psychic reality - the return to a state of innocence through memory, and lastly, the mask as the ambiguous point of contact between a subjective truth which incapacitates, and a mode of life in which this awareness somehow can communicate itself to others.

The symbolism, though as usual in Bergman, primarily of an atmospheric-naturalistic kind, is here successfully integrated into the physical journey as a metaphor of memory and the mind.

Sat. Mar. 14th B.F.T. T.E.

ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP: DISORIENTATED (W. Germany '68) A.Kluge.

Leni Peickert, daughter of a circus owner, takes over after her father has been killed during his number. She wants to change the whole idea of a circus, but nothing comes of it and, with a kind of ironic resignation, she goes to work for television. For Kluge the circus is the metaphor of a closed universe, where perfection, by becoming an end in itself, is rendered meaningless. "They had worked their way up that far. Now they didn't know what else to do. To go on, just trying even harder, didn't makeany sense.

Kluge sees this impotence of perfection as applying to all artistic creativity which understands itself as a world apart, and in particular, he presents it as the dilemma of the avant-garde, caught between complicity and utopia. In ARTISTES revolutionary art without a basis in society appears as reactionary, and although the film may seem 'defeatist', Kluge aims primarily at a certain naivety which he thinks confuses engaged art of today.

Thurs. Mar. 5th - 7th B.F.T. 8,30. T.E.

THE BRIDE WORE BLACK (France '68) F. Truffaut; Jeanne Moreau

As usual with Truffaut, two forms of narrative logic oppose each other in his films - a mechanical one and an emotional one. In THE BRIDE WORE BLACK the logic of suspense (once we realize the story pattern it becomes inevitable, and therefore pointless in dramatic terms) is counterposed to Julie's increasing "involvement" with her victims. Choosing once more a book by William Irish as his story basis, Truffaut leads the stock American revenge motive ad absurdum, by reducing it to a kind of mathematical necessity. The cause which makes Julie murder six men is at once tragic and 'trivial' and her success is due not to the intensity of her feelings, but the skill with which she 'penetrates' into the world of her victims, exposing and exploiting the inherent folly, pretensions or stupidity of their lives. The crossing of the emotional and the mechanical strands is most apparent towards the end when she appears at the funeral of one of her victims, is identified and convicted. But what might appear as a moment of fatal weakness could be seen as a deliberate design, when we realize that her conviction leads her finally to the last of her victims, whom she finishes off with a kitchen knife (a scene which Truffaut, characteristically, only conveys through sound). As an unobtrusive actress of parts in other people's lives Julie realizes her intentions - an analogy to Truffaut unobtrusively directing other people's stories to realize his?

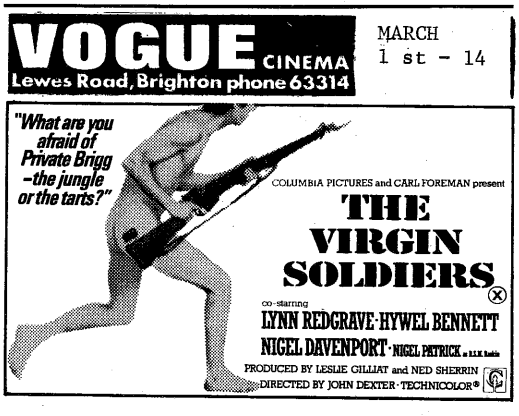
Sun. Mar. 22nd - 28th Continentale 8.30. T.E.

THE PROFESSIONALS (USA '16) R.Brooks; Lee Marvin, Jack Palance

THE PROFESSIONALS makes a fascinating comparison with Peckinpah's THE WILD BUNCH. Set in the same place (Mexico) at roughly the same period (1919) it also follows the career of a number of men "who came too late and stayed too long," in this case a bunch of mercenaries hired to rescue a kidnapped female from a Mexican Guerilla leader. Unlike Peckinpah, Brooks makes the working out of his plot too mechanical and obtrusive to bear the lyrical intensity of his view of his characters - "men tempered like steel"

Another interesting parallel is the role of Robert Regan who participates in the main action only in a minor way in both films. in THE WILD BUNCH he and his bedraggled gang play the role of furies inexorably hunting down Holden. In THE PROFESSIONALS he acts as an outsider, stunned by and highlighting the starkness and violence of the life and landscape of the Mexican hills.

Sun. Mar. 15th - 21st. Vogue G.J.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REVIEWS

U.S.A. 1947 Orson Welles

Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth

the lady from shanghai

Perhaps the most significant of Welles' affinities with his idol Shakespeare is his genuine nostalgia for the decline of a world governed by 'la morale de la générosité' (Domarchi's phrase), a chivalrous ethic incarnated by characters such as The Ambersons, Michael O'Hara, Quinlan and Falstaff. Indeed, CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT represents the most immediate and comprehensive expression of this decline, in the scenes depicting the Battle of Shrewsbury, which, far from being chivalric and honourable, becomes, in reality, a chaotic grotesque slaughter. A corollary of this decline is the subsequent loss of 'l'individualité disponible', usually too liberally mistaken for pure megalomania; it represents a perfect, irresponsible liberty from which the will to power is drawn. Cricumstance provides the Welles hero with the potential to attain a kind of omnipotence; but he is never aware, until it is too late, of the treacherous, equivocal nature of this potential, and, in his dying moments, he is mocked by the cruel delusion of time - delusion whereby he fails to elicit even the most basic truth about his existence, during a lifetime in which he seems to have elicited all.

Thus a constant thematic preoccupation of Welles is the character condemned to an existence of ironic individuality, whose energy is, in itself, a profound impotence. Such is Michael O'Hara, whose opening words announce this irony: 'When I start out to make a fool of myself, there's little enough can stop me.' Using inelegant but effective fighting methods, he rescues the beautiful Elsa Bannister from assault by thugs in a deserted park. By way of expressing his 'gratitude', her husband, Arthur Bannister, a crippled lawyer, invites him to accompany them on a cruise on their private yacht, the 'Circe'. With a remarkable preciseness, Welles has situated his hero; cavalier, itinerant, O'Hara demonstrates an ingenuousness, an impulsiveness, and a courage which contrasts strongly with the society of the Bannisters - society of affluence, of tranquility, but also of deceit and betrayal. The mise-en-scene of THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI abounds with examples of a recurring metaphor which defines the world of the Bannisters; imagery of bestiality, of monstrosity. The scene in which Elsa exhorts O'Hara to elope with her is staged by Welles in an aquarium, where exotic sea-creatures writhe in their glass cages; Arthur Bannister himself, ('as helpless as a sleeping rattle-snake'), with the physical aspect of some repulsive insect, as he limps around on his crutches; even the 'swine' connotation implicit in the name of the yacht. As Bannister, his wife and his business associate Grisby quarrel among themselves during a beach-picnic, O'Hara relates a phenomenon that he witnessed at one time off the coast of Brazil - a shoal of sharks turning on one another: 'You could smell the death reeking up from the sea. There wasn't one that survived.' The trio assume the aspect of sinister predators - preying on O'Hara, and on each other.

The relationship between such disparate personalities, then, is one of attraction-repulsion; O'Hara is, on the one hand, fascinated by the beauty of Elsa, and, on the other, suspicious of her treacherous nature. Yet, it is his false sense of security, of 'disponiblement', of extreme liberty (the extent of which can be gauged by his immediate acceptance of Grisby's bizarre proposal that he take the blame for a murder which never happened) which propels him forward; inexorably attracted, he believes himself free. Welles' mise-en-scene appears to emphasize Elsa's consummate beauty and honesty, while insinuating a ubiquitous corruption - her constant appearance in white dresses, her number on board the yacht. In this guise, she seems to represent a deceptively simplistic reality; everything for which O'Hara has striven. 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair'; the equivocal chant of the witches from MACBETH, which Welles was to shoot a year later, is already present in his imagination. O'Hara is ensnared by the 'double sense' which Elsa embodies, sensing, but not comprehending, her treachery.

'Oh, there's a fair face to the land, but you can't hide the hunger and guilt'; O'Hara, looking down at a sweltering Acapulco, speaks these words to Grisby. But, no matter how impressive the appearances, there comes a time, inevitably, when reality reveals itself. O'Hara is inexorably committed, having accepted, in a gullible manner, Grisby's solicitation, and assumed responsibility for his 'death'. But he does die, by murder, and O'Hara is committed for trial. At this point, Welles' mise-en-scene, increasing momentum, indicates the commencement of the hero's inevitable destiny; escaping from custody, O'Hara hides in a Chinese theatre, and it is here, indubitably, that he recognizes the seriousness of his dilemna. In the theatre, while the players postulate a manufactured illusion, O'Hara encounters truth - the discovery that Elsa is Grisby's murderer. He recognizes, too, that his 'liberty' was an illusion also - at the point at which he is impotent. Taken by Elsa's accomplices to a deserted 'Luna Park', a mechanism in the 'Crazy House' - huge metaphor of O'Hara as puppet. The image jars, image of Welles' imagination rather than the reality of the situation, but its extraordinary preciseness in rendering O'Hara's condition compensates for this, demonstrating the paradox implicit throughout the realization. The manifestations of his 'liberty' reveal its nature: manipulation by others.

The climax of the movie is located in the 'Magic Mirror Maze'; the multiple images of the protagonists (O'Hara, Elsa, Bannister) reveal the 'prismatic nature of reality'. In this scene, too many critics have concentrated on what they understand to be Welles' destruction of Rita Hayworth's screen persona, as exemplified in GILDA of Charles Vidor a year previously - the American Woman incarnate - with the traditions of Hollywood contemptuously discarded. O'Hara watches, an impotent spectator as Bannister and his wife shoot each other down; with each shot, with the fragmentation of each mirror, his illusion of freedom and its resultant power is shattered. Elsa's betrayal becomes explicit, her veritable self is revealed, a simulacrum, a romantic and deceptive embodiment of the forces that emmesh and destroy the 'individualité disponible'. As O'Hara walks away from the maze, nothing appears changed. In his casual brogue, we hear on the soundtrack: 'Everybody is somebody's fool sometime - maybe I'll live so long, I'll forget her.' At this point, Welles' irony is now explicit - O'Hara is tainted with Elsa's corruption, his ethic destroyed by her treachery. At the moment at which he appears to have escaped unscathed, his impotence is emphasized. In his quest for the ultimate freedom, he negates himself, a truth the realization of which necessitates the deprivation of all he holds dear.

PETER LLOYD

la voie lactée

France 1969 Luis Bunuel

There are two religions and two kinds of magic: one imprisons and constricts, by manipulating fears and anxieties in the service of the established order; the others liberate by decreating and disrupting existing mental sets, by ex cising fears and breaking down inhibitions. In the first category we find the established churches; in the second we find charismatic religious leaders and the surrealists for example - Jesus Christ and Luis Bunuel.

It is necessary to make this distinction at the outset since LA VOIE LACTEE is already being interpreted as a sign that Bunuel, in this testamentary film, has somehow made his peace with Catholicism and with God. In any event, there is the temptation to assume that the movie has Catholism for its subject and, in face of the undoubted difficulties of interpretation which the picture presents, to explain them by pointing to "ambiguities" and "ambivalences" in Bunuel's attitude. Such a way of talking about Bunuel has its tactical advantages but it is doubtful, whether, in the final analysis, these vague gestures in the direction of profundity contribute any less to trivialising the meaning of his work than discussion which presents Bunuel as a genial jester at the court of the bourgeosie. "Ambiguity" is a term which does not fit Bunuel because on a great many subjects Bunuel makes himself extremely clear - too clear, it has often been murmured - and because the intellectual shilly-shallying and posturing which it so flatteringly designates is an anathema to Bunuel and had frequently been parodied by him. Bunuel's work resists interpretation because for Bunuel and for the surrealists in general, the function of art is to puzzle and provoke; to raise questions rather than to answer them. Bunuel's movies are parables or constellations of parables. The episodes have the sharpness, clarity and vividness of a parable; they do not require explanation or interpretation (THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL); yet there remains something in them that is challenging and disturbing. It is significant that in LA VOIE LACTEE Bunuel does not present Christ as a pious evangelist, armed with an abundant store of moralistic, self-explanatory homilies, but as a born raconteur, a paradoxical and contradictory moralist, who does not have any ansers and who, insofar as he is expected to, must be regarded as something of a charlatan. Bunuel's artistic method is to create a determining framework within which indeterminacy can operate, the juxtaposition of episodes simultaneously fixes a pattern of meaning, while at the same time leaving a large measure of openness, since there is no unilinear development and interpretative linkages are hinted at rather than made completely explicit. Thus, Bunuel, in employing symbols or icons, which cannot be pinned down to a single specific meaning, which are relatively free-floating (the bird claws or the bear in THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL) remains true to the surrealist tradition, but his method of deploying them is analagous to the procedures of contemporary music, where random elements are used to within a highly structured framework. Thus, there can be no single interpretation of LA VOIE LACTEE; and yet one must insist that in the picture Bunuel does have a point of view, a surrealist point of view which is defined in relation to Catholicism.

We have great difficulty in understanding this point of view because surrealism has been one of the major intellectual casualties of the twentieth century. On the one hand the word "surrealism" has been used so loosely that it has been virtualy emptied of content (v.Ado Kyrou LE SURREALISME AU CINEMA); on the other we have the historical fate of the movement itself, its progressive disintegration and the predicament of its leader, Andre Breton - ground between the upper and lower millstones of scientific socialism and scientific Freudianism. Indeed, there is something almost quaint about surrealism. Its rejection of the banal routine of bourgeois existence is wholly characteristic of avant-guarde movements from the early nineteenth century onwards; the dabbling in spiritualism, occultism, automatic writing tends not to tie it in with Freudianism as with pre-Freudian substitutes for religion. Much else seems positively 18th century, a Voltairean anti-clericalism, a Rouseauesque rejection of culture, a Sadean cult of violence, cruelty and total self-expression; the emphasis on the truth of various forms of convulsionary experience. Does surrealism have anything to offer us? I believe it does, but I propose to orientate my discussion of it towards Bunuel, not only because Bunuel is one of the most important artists produced by the surrealist movement but because I believe that his work contains the most durable and viable expression of the surrealist position and that this is worth spelling out - even at the risk of offending those who regard the cinema as the last refuge of anti-intellectualism.

The essential drive of surrealism is to overcome all forms of dualism and of dualistic thinking i.e. mind and body, subject and object, dream and reality, good and evil. Needless to say these are only some of the most important and they do not exhaust the categories of dualism nor the enemies of surrealism. Dualism can be regarded as one of the most essential signatures of the Western intellectual tradition. Dualism is not peculiar to Western thought; what is distinctive is rather the way in which these antitheses have been intellectualised and sharpened into intractible, irreconcilable oppositions. To this development of dualism can be ascribed some of the most striking characteristics of Western culture. Scientific knowledge for example, defines itself in oppositon to religion by making use of religious distinctions; science takes matter for its sphere, it offers knowledge of this world; religion deals with the spirit and with a knowledge of the next. Similarly a hypostatised opposition between knower and object of knowledge is the methodological basis of scientific advance. But religious dualism left philosophy with a number of unresolved problems; and also with a confusion as to whether these problems were to form the permanent subject matter of philosophy, or whether they were to be solved, overcome or otherwise disposed of. On the whole, in the modern period, the preponderant view is the latter and, almost inevitably the philosopher who found dualism most intolerable and who made the most strenuous efforts to overcome it, that is, Hegel, was the greatest influence on Breton, and through, him on the whole surrealist movement. Doubtless Bunuel has not read Hegel, but when Hegel writes:

> "This is abstract thinking: to see nothing in the murderer except the abstract fact that he is a murderer, and to annul all other human essence in him with this simple quality"

or

> "Among the Austrians a soldier may be beaten, he is canaille; for whatever has the passive right to be beaten is canaille. Thus the common soldier is for the officer this abstractum of a beatable subject with whom a gentleman and port d 'epee must trouble himself - and that could drive one to make a pact with the devil."

- these are surely sentiments he could respond to! For both Hegel and Bunuel abstraction expresses itself through an annihilation of the object, in a falsification and flattening out of reality into a schematic construct, which in its rationalised form becomes the real thing. The whole system is self-validating, self-perpetuating, self-sufficient. It can never question its own premises. Hence, for Hegel, the sterility and circularity of conventional philosophy, for Bunuel the sterility and circularity of bourgeois existence in THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL.

Surrealism insists on human freedom and human creativity; it is anti-reductionist and anti-derminist. For Freud free association was a guide to the past history of a specific form of the Oedipus complex, for the surrealists it was a way of liberating the spontaneity of the imagination from the shackles of convention and social existence. Surrealism does not provide much of a basis for psychiatric research, which must necessarily concern itself with determined phenomena, but they very fact that so much of its imagery cannot be psychologised away is convincing evidence that in matters of art they were more right than wrong. For the surrealists art is the green light signalling our way out to the cultural bottle. The repression which Freud regarded as characteristic of culture in general is,for them, a bourgeois phenomenon, and, like Marcuse, abolishable.

THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL is an exploration of unfreedom as a way of life. The expensively attired guests, who find they are unable to leave after attending the opera and dining with their host merely express, in magical form, the inability to escape from a particular mental set that characterises bourgeois culture in general. But of course the way in which Bunuel presents it and ironically points it up clarifies this situation for us, punctures its hypothetical dignity as image of a universal human condition (the oposite of Beckett) and reveals its rationalisations ("We were all enchanted by the music, by the conversation") and irrationalities ("We want to get rid of him ... We're justified by necessity") for what they are. Episodes, meetings are repeated for their whole manner of existence is characterised by repetition - even their dreams are banal. Yet their absurd predicament is magnified and ennobled as it is transformed into a crisis, with policemen and onlookers in attendance. In a sense, of course, it is a crisis - the fact that there is no way out - but one that is not usually apprehended as such since this state of affairs is taken to be normal. For Bunuel bourgeois existence is both extremely rigid and at the same time, extremely fragile. On the one hand there is the extreme difficulty of escaping, the alternating moods of lassitude and panic, where drugs are ncessary as food, the resort ot magical methods of appeasement and atonement which prefigure their thanksgiving in church at the end; on the other there is the fact of their functional dependence on servants and underlings to maintain their little world of narcissism, so that it collapses in face of the spontaneous - when one of the servants decides to go for a stroll. Bu the bourgeoisie see a conspiracy in everything - just as they attribute a broken window to a "passing Jew". Bunuel relentlessly forces the oppressiveness of their world upon us: over and over again the camera tracks into the room as if in search of something new and is continually frustrated; mirrors reinforce the sense of imprisonment, even cutting offers no sense of release. And when they finally do get out they find themselves imprisoned in the church. It is essential to understand that the conclusion of the picture is not merely a joke at the expense of clergey: it is precisely the dualism of sacred and profane, the separation between the church and bourgeois social life, the way in which the bourgeois divides Christain moral principles from the business of daily life that constitutes unfreedom, surrealism explodes this separation with the dynamite of the imagination - for even the lambs here though ostensibly Christian in significance become images of disorder, uncertainty and confusion.

In LA VOIE LACTEE Bunuel's critique of dualism becomes much more complex and much more explicit. Bunuel refers to quite a number of theological cruces: the dual nature of Christ as both God and man, transubstatiation, the relationship between soul and body, and so on. But Bunuel is not concerned with these doctrines purely in the abstract but with their social meaning. Dualism and a willingness to rest in an acceptance of it is mystifying. Dualism reinforces the division of classes in society and supports the established order. This apparently arcane emphasis is demonstrated by Bunuel in innumerable concrete ways. The bourgeois mind separates different levels of experience and refuses to make any connection between them. Thus, at the very beginning, as Bunuel's two tramps continue their modern pilgrimage to the shrine St. James of Compostella, along a busy highway, we see that even the simplest form a charity - the offer of a lift - is lacking in a society still ostensibly dedicated to Christian principles. It is this separation that permits M. Richard to discourse on the double nature of Christ and at the same time to chuck out the tramps, to tell the cleaning women to "clean up the Cloakroom" and discuss the menu with the refined couple. The problem for Bunuel is why Christianity has so consistently preferred explanations which resist understanding or commonsense to those which are more readily comprehensible - like the Pateliers, who believed that Christ was in the host like a hare in a pate. His answer is that it is in the interest of the established Chruch that religious teaching shall remain inaccessible and unquestionable Dogma, since this ensures sthe maintenance of social order and enables the Church to support tyrannical regines more effectively. Thus the priest is essentially a policeman, and vice versa - perhaps the most telling shot in the whole movie is the slow pan up the bishop's habit, taking in an incalculable number of tiny, orderly buttons. In the scene at the Institution Lamartine the implications of this are spelt out. "The living reality" of religion is expressed through young children being made to spout an incomprehensible rigmarole of anathemas, in the belief that Racine, Lamartine and Henri de Regnier constitute a meaningful cultural tradition, the insistance that "our classes remain undisturbed". Against this Bunuel insists on the power of the imagination to decreate and to negate reality - to imagine the Pope before a firing squad! The abstractness of religious belief is emphasised in the sword fight (itself a symbolic embodiment of rationalism) between a Jansenist and a Jesuit in which the Jansenist denies his will is free even in the very moment of saving himself from death. Though deeply opposed in theory these individuals are united in their class attitudes in their dedication to the principle of mystification and in their refusal to relate doctrine to experience. Hence they make up and go off arm in arm.

In the early part of the picture Bunuel links religious and scientific rationalism and indicates that this functional separation is destructive and impoverishing. The bleeding boy who can stop the chauffeur-driven limousine becomes an emblem of a civilisation crippled yet omnipotent. The need to unite the sacred and the profane (or rather to abolish those categories all together) is suggested in the sequence in Spain where the two men who shout "God is One" escape the heretic hunters and don modern hunting gear. One shoots a rosary and then sees a vision of the Virgin in which the rosary is handed back to him. This suggests the development of the modern spirit (Protestantism and after). The assertion "God is One" can lead, in one direction to rationalism; but destroying the rosary, conventional religious piety, can lead to a rediscovery of the marvellous and the miraculous - the resary handed back. The modern predicament is suggested by the scene at the inn. Both men locked in their rooms are tempted by the priest - who is, for Bunuel, a devil. The priest has no genuinefaith in the beautiful, the miraculous or the marvellous - his story about the seduced nun whose job as treasurer is taken over by the Virgin for a two year period, is typically bourgeois in its unimaginative pruriency. He rushes back to talk about the Virgin again because he has forgotten to make his auditors swallow the rationalistic pill - the various doctrines associated with the Assumption. The Virgin is censored for doubting the Annunciation - but for Bunuel it is precisely this doubt that is authentic and religious in the fullest sense. In the bedrooms of the inn the two huntsmen find themselves paired with a Sade figure (the sceptic) and with a girl whom he has been torturing (the one who sees the vision). The priest prevents the "believers" from making love - this must be legitimised (everything must be legitimised) by marriage. In the other room the Sade figure announces "My hatred of science and technology will lead me one

Cont. on p.13

king and country

G.B. 1964 Joseph Losey
Tom Courtney Dirk Bogarde

Well, is it pro or anti war? The common tag hung on all war films has often been the subject of whole articles 'proving' that really films hailed as 'anti' are in fact 'pro'. The usual line of reasoning seeks to detach the film's ostensible 'message' from the form in which this message is portrayed, which using the usual techniques of action cinema involves the spectator in the activities it is ostensibly condemning. This approach has a certain usefulness in discussing films made by people like David Lean, but is, on the whole, useless for analysing the films of serious directors. It would appear to me that as a first rough approximation, war films can be broken down ideologically into three categories (there may well be more) and that these three types are basically different and must be treated differently.

First there is what one might call the out-and-out anti war film. The subject is the abstraction 'war' seen as a thing-in-itself of unimaginable horror, with players caught and tossed about like puppets. Milestoni's ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT is the archetype and perhaps the only genuine film of this type. By its very nature, such a film resembles a tract rather than a complex work of art. On the other hand, since like sin, war is something everyone is against, the 'anti war fake' is easily turned off by the hundred, the classic being perhaps THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI, where even the down-beat ending of the original novel was changed into an up-beat one completely at odds with the ostensible message of the film.

Second, and far more important, are the films where war is taken as a frame for the working out of an individual director's themes. No discussion is needed of the 'big picture'- the rationale or causes of the situation the characters find themselves in. A classic illustration is by Anthony Mann - MEN IN WAR. Often the plot comprises an isolated group of soldiers with a single task to accomplish. The theatre of war is unimportant. It may be World War II, Europe, Asia, Korea, etc. The importance lies in the director's handling of the situation and his working out of his themes.

Finally, there is the film where a director's view of war is integral with his view of society and his interests. Such a director need not by any means be leftward inclined. Samuel Fuller certainly has made films of this type such as VERBOTEN and MERRILS MARAUDERS, though at some points in his films (especially CHINA GATE) this conscious philosophy seems at odds with his handling of the social dynamics of the situation he is portraying.

Joseph Losey is certainly a director with a coherent and consistent view of society, on the whole a Marxist view, and KING AND COUNTRY, his only war film, reflects this view.

The problem is posed at first sight in simple terms with Tom Courtney playing a working class lad who, numbed and crushed by his sufferings in the British Infantry deserts from his regiment and takes a simple way out 'trying to walk home'. Dirk Bogarde, his defending officer in the subsequent court martial sets out the standard military virtues of the officer class, and originally accepts his job only out of a sense of military duty. However, as in real life, the problem is much more complicated. Courtney, the volunteer with three years' service, is not a tragic innocent, unable to comprehend what he is doing, nor is he a conscious revolutionary striking against the system that condemns him to death by one way or another. Bogarde is not an idealised seeker after justice (as in the style of Fonda in TWELVE ANGRY MEN), but a rather weak character, suffering the same tensions as Courtney. His defence rests on the concept of 'shell shock' as a pathological condition for which a man is not to blame, but it is weak even to his own ears and dismissed out of hand by the judges. Bogarde moves closer to Courtney not by a growing feeling of brotherhood - they are as unable to communicate at the end of the film as at the beginning - but by Bogarde's growing realization of the necessary relationship between the war effort and the killing of one man. This is objectively pointed out by the fact that Courtney's death is made certain by the necessity of stiffening morale before the coming attack at Paschendaele. Courtney is placed before a firing squad and finally finished off by Bogarde, whose chances of surviving the coming attack are as small as Courtney's were of avoiding the firing squad.

There are no villains in the film. The case is not made that with proper psychiatric advice Courtney would have been shipped off to a safe base hospital. The point is made crystal clear that Courtney's role, by one means or another, is to be cannon fodder, as is Bogarde's.

Nevertheless, Losey seems finally to fail in what appears to be one of his major aims, the relation of Courtney and Bogarde to the context of the war as a whole. His next obvious attempt to do this is in the juxtaposition of still photographs at various points in the plot, such is the shot of George V and Wilhelm II riding together after Courtney has admitted joining up 'for King and Country'. On the whole this is far too crude compared with the delicate interplay of the two major characters. Similarly the symbolism of posing Courtney to remind us of the dead man earlier seen sinking into the mud, and the splashing with mud of Bogarde's immaculate boots after he has heard of the death sentence seems laboured. Somehow the film does not hold together on all levels.

This may be partly due to a failure of sensibility, partly to a failure of nerve. Losey as an American cannot really match the traumatic effect of World War I on the European intellectuals of his generation. Again, it is noticeable that his British films, although masterly in their delineation of a crumbling upper class and disorientated middle class, have naturally failed to cope with working class characters except as sinister outsiders (THE SERVANT, SLEEPING TIGER) or opponents (savage or otherwise) as in MODESTY BLAISE and KING AND COUNTRY.

KING AND COUNTRY also shows what might be considered a failure of nerve in that it attempts to treat the logical culmination of the class war in a situation most susceptible to acceptance by the tender liberal conscience - the brave man cracking under strain in World War I, which every good liberal knows was a tragic mistake. Losey has failed where lesser and less committed directors succeeded, notably Aldrich in ATTACK, to relate this war not only to the social context in which it took place, but also to place it in such a way as to relate to the social context of his audience. Nevertheless one could argue that it is not possible to make such a film in a British studio at this time and that in this case Losey has probably made the best British film on World War I.

G. J.

the hustler

U.S.A. 1961 Robert Rossen

Paul Newman Piper Laurie George C. Scott

Rossen frequently uses the 'games of chance', in addition to their limited value as minor contests dominated by a certain segment of society, to represent the essential ground of contention on which his hero is forced to certify himself. This recurrent symbol was conspicuous in the gambling-tables of JOHNNY O'CLOCK, Rossen's first assignment as director, further developed in the boxing ring of BODY AND SOUL and the arena of THE BRAVE BULLS, and conclusively illustrated perhaps in the pool-tables of THE HUSTLER. It is within this financial bracket of society, of organised and subversive gangsterdom, that Rossen can most successfully expose the ambiguity of the human condition. In this way, THE HUSTLER is not merely documenting reality, but transcending its objective material, through the sympathy and understanding of personal vision, to become universal.

In THE HUSTLER, the pool-game is seen as a distorted symbol of personal fulfilment, emblematic of Eddie's initial thrust for glory through to his final desperate gesture of individualism. In all, Rossen depicts five games, three in supplementary detail. There is a pre-credit sequence, which determines Fast Eddie's stature as a hustler. Rossen's zoom-in to Eddie's face, as he completes the 'impossible' shot with the sureness of intoxication, that could never be repeated, reveals a potentiality as yet unaffected by material degradation. The sequence also prepares for the first marathon confrontation with Minnesota Fats, in its demonstration of pool skill. Building up towards this confrontation, Eddie and his partner Charlie enter the Ames Billiard house to await Fats' arrival. Charlie shivers, sensing the atmosphere of a morgue. Rossen qualifies his observation by pulling back the camera, at high angle, to show the spectral stillness of the dust-sheets over the tables, the corresponding inertia of the occupants. Eddie's reply to this 'I'ill be alive when I get out' is typical of his total lack of awareness, and the illusory confidence he carries in his talent as a pool player. The fallacy is disclosed during the encounter with Fats. What is established is that the game cannot be weighed up solely in terms of reputation (Fats) or talent (Eddie), but is rewarded by the strength of character. Thus the placid endurance of Fats is challenged by the self-assured skill of Eddie who, obsessed with a desire to see Fats submit, overreaches his capacity to do so and is summarily defeated.

The central dilemma of the Rossen hero is the need to convert his unexplored inner energy into a coherent and positive force. In THE HUSTLER, the energy is delineated by the natural skill which Eddie possesses, as in LILITH, it is Vincent's immediate communication with Lilith. These gifts, being undeveloped, are vulnerable to the corrupting influences that are present in their respective surroundings. Eddie's craft at hustling is combined with a search for identity, which is gradually submerged beneath the underworld pressures of a corrupt society, thriving on such surface attractions as easy money and power within a certain radius. As a perfect example of this visual equivocation, is the asylum in LILITH, with its vague beckoning beauty as a facade, which conceals the emotional destructiveness of its inmates. Here, it is interesting that diametrically opposed to the Walsh hero, who in conditions where it seems that he can descend no lower, displays the core of his essential energy (BFR no. 15), the Rossen hero, at his lowest ebb, is also at his most insecure and defenceless. In THE HUSTLER, heavily disillusioned by his defeat, Eddie becomes a prey to the profitable allure of hustling on a grand scale, as proposed by Bert Gordon, just as Vincent, in LILITH, weakened by the elusive sexuality of Lilith, is lured into the mysterious web of her existence. In pursuing the symbols of their identity, they both commit themselves to erroneous and ultimately destructive courses. Bert Gordon, who has witnessed Eddie's play against Minnesota Fats, recognises his brilliance at pool, yet sees at the same time, the fatal flaw in his make-up that constitutes his classification as a 'loser'. Repeatedly recalling this stigma, he impedes Eddie's maturity, and consequently is able to manipulate his 'talent', twisting it so that the raw unshaped energy is forced into obliquity, and becomes bewildered, aggressive, warped. In his singular drive for success, denying his energy a positive outlet, Eddie's progress in the development of 'character', essential attribute of the 'winner', is purely imaginery.

On the other side of Eddie, in support of his creativity and attempting to achieve an equilibrium in opposition to the demoniacal Bert Gordon, is Sarah, the girl. Apart from symbolically upholding the aesthetic and the personal, she suffers from human weaknesses too. Her dependence on alcohol and her physical disability (she is lame) separate her from other Rossen heroines that preceded her, particularly Peg in BODY AND SOUL, whose role is basically very similar to Sarah's, though she does not receive the lacerations or personal degradations of the latter. Sarah meets Eddie at an almost deserted bus terminal, after his defeat, and is, at first repelled by his violation of her, the evidence of his rootless passion. 'You're too hungry' she says, pushing him away. Yet it is this hunger that she submits to, as she suddenly appears at the terminal again to search for him. Rossen's camera takes a dual position here, where it surveys Sarah's slightly lurching approach to Eddie's table, and in appostion to this, Eddie's passivity as he watches her wordlessly. The wide screen is especially effective in this scene where the camera, focusing on Sarah, emphasises the centrality of the lovers, by isolating the waitress on the left side of the frame. The scene anticipates Sarah's later unsteady totter, emphatic in its drunken resignation, down the stairs of the rich player's house.

In the earlier stages of their relationship, Rossen creates an impression of an artificially closed world inside Sarah's apartment, a world that Eddie wants to lose himself in, to efface the humiliation of being beaten. This closed world is conveyed by ostensible use of both door and blinds (the blinds are closed in one sequence by Eddie as he makes love to Sarah, just as the door serves as a barrier that Charlie cannot penetrate). At the same time, Rossen sharply contrasts the sordid interior of Sarah's flat, filled with the vestige of living out of tins, scattered clothing, cigarettes, alcohol and love-making, with the natural freedom that is suggested by the declaration of love in the picnic scene. Here, Eddie is able to articulate the personal creativity of his pool-skill as opposed to its restrictive material uses, describing the instincts of a jockey to exemplify his own. 'He knows when to make the break.' For the first time, Eddie is able to recognise that behind these emotional assertions, something belongs to him. His rash courage has sent him out hustling on his own, and to 'show them what the game is all about', and as a result his thumbs are broken by the bouncers. For the duration of these few moments, he fulfils Sarah's dreams of love. However, the jockey allusion becomes ironic when flat-racing is used as a temptation to provoke an invitation from the rich player to play billiards

privately, at his home, and brutally perverted when Bert Gordon turns snarlingly to Sarah to tell her that she is 'the last horse in the race'.

Sarah is aware, from the beginning of their journeys with Bert Gordon, of Eddie's superficial eagerness and Gordon's sinister motives. Her novel, which she has started (a scene where she drunkenly taps the typewriter keys with one wayward finger, while Eddie drinks heavily in the background) is savagely elliptical in its summary of their present existence and a forecast of her own collision with Gordon later. 'We have a contract of depravity, and all we have to do is pull the blinds down.' Reading this, Eddie walks out in disgust. His return is seemingly on account of his smashed thumbs, yet in itself it is representative of the twisted circumstances of their love, the violation of its natural progress. Faced with Eddie's decision to link up with Bert Gordon's money and the promise of raising the stake to play Minnesota Fats again, Sarah accompanies him. Her desperate dreams of love have proved to be inaccessible, ficticious. 'I made you up', she says hopelessly to Eddie, when he tries to explain what the extra money will accomplish for them. Sarah's isolation in the milieu of pool, money and men (either Eddie with Bert Gordon, or Eddie at the 'hustlers' convention') is memorably captured in one low-angle shot of her waiting for the two men to finish talking. They ignore her presence, and the superiority of her moral position is expressed by this shot, alongside its futility and meaninglessness in the all-male environment. Her ultimate warning remains unheeded by Eddie down in the billiard room of the rich player, whom he and Bert Gordon are 'suckering'. At the hotel, she sacrifices her body to Bert Gordon, then walks to the bathroom, printing meticulously 'Twisted, Perverted, Crippled' on the mirror and commits suicide. Certainly Sarah's self-sacrifice can be seen as a progression from Peg's reaction to Charley's fixed fight in BODY AND SOUL. Whereas Peg has merely stood back to await Charley's reconciliation with himself, Sarah goes with Eddie to make him realise the pervading corruption that is crippling his development. Similarly, whereas Peg's response to Charley's acknowledgement of his own involvement in the bosing rackets is to slap him (i.e. cut off her emotions towards him), Sarah gives herself to the sexual lust of Bert Gordon so that Eddie can break away from him, and the ubiquitous corruption that surrounds him.

However, while Sarah is in the process of making her sacrifice, Eddie is in the midst of the transitory battlefield, that is to be resolved in the final game with Fats. Rossen creates, in the downstairs billiard room of the rich player, a perverse sexual conflict underneath the movement of the game itself. Money becomes a threat to Eddie's manhood, since Bert Gordon controls the situation, deciding to terminate the game prematurely. Rossen then cuts from Gordon's reversed decision to the aftermath, where the rich player sinks into a chair and grins masochistically. Strategically, Eddie is placed in between Bert Gordon and Findlay. On the one side, he is confronted with the nervous masochism of Findlay, and on the other, the aspirant sadism of Bert Gordon. Eddie is shown in a separate frame, picked out by his own twisted victory and alienated by his subsequent revulsion. His corresponding impotence is revealed when he discovers the death of Sarah and its implications. Framed on the left in the bathroom kneeling over her body, he is dominated by the legs of Bert Gordon in the doorway on the right. He sees Gordon and rushes him, framed now on top of him as he nearly manages to strangle him. Rossen fades out on Gordon choking pitifully. The resemblance of this scene to the similar sequence that exposes Vincent's impotence in LILITH is remarkable. In it, the camera tracks Vincent as he follows Lilith and her female lover to the barn by the river. He is framed in the door of the barn, checked by Lilith's dishevelled appearance and the knowledge of his own exclusion from their 'mad' communication. He rushes her, yelling, and is seen above Lilith in two-shot as the lover cowers in the background.

For the showdown with Fats, Eddie is transformed. His childish hysteria in the previous game is gone, replaced by a maniacal determination. His commentary, directed at Bert Gordon, is terse, bitter. His play is intense, conclusive, superhuman. Though it might seem that this ending is stereotyped, nothing could be further from either Rossen's intentions or a true compendium of the circumstances. Unlike the final positivity of BODY AND SOUL, where the role of boxing, throughout the film identified with its capitalist promotion, is inverted by the hero's resolve to challenge his own fixed fight, thereby becoming a symbol of personal fulfilment, in THE HUSTLER, Eddie's triumph over Minnesota Fats is Pyrrhic. His refusal to give Bert Gordon his share of his winnings only severs his former connections with pool. His triumph is twisted by the death of Sarah who has made it possible, and without whom the victory itself is fatuous, empty. In rejecting Bert Gordon's offer of a partnership, he is rejecting his own creativity, having already thrown away his opportunity of love.

CHRISTOPHER LLOYD

LA VOIE LACTEE

Cont. from p.10

day to the absurdity of believing in God". In other words, in the final analysis Sade, patron saint of surrealism, is himself linked with rationalism and religiosity. Neither atheism nor secularised religiosity in the case of these two men can escape from the church.

The way out is suggested by the tramps. Since the priest has said that "the house of impure women is the house of the dead" they will lied down with a prostitute and "take a wife of whoredoms" as the gentleman advised them at the beginning. The phrases "no more mercy" and "ye are not my people" will be turned against the bourgeoisie. Sacredness in all existence - bread as sacred in itself and not as a symbol of some thing or other - will be affirmed - and is affirmed too in Bunuel's lucid mise-en-scene in which dream, myth and reality are united in common specificity. Things are what they are - both sacred and profane, neither one or the other. And so was Christ, who can only heal people in so far as they are capable of healing themselves (the final scene in which the blind men, temporarily restored to sight, are brought short by a small rut in the ground); he who came into the world to disturb beliefs and unsettle attitudes ("I come not to send peace but the Sword"), and whose example offers no simple answers or permanent cures. Bunuel's Christ is essentially a subversive - an so for that matter is Bunuel!

David Morse

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FEATURES

the american musical

Despite the fact that there existed a music hall tradition in almost every European country at the turn of the century, it is only America that has successfully transposed its 'Vaudeville', Ziegfield Follies, dance hall revues, acrobatic routines etc. onto the screen and thereby created a new genre of popular entertainment.

Other countries have produced musicals, but outside Hollywood only the French can be said to have a tradition - the musical comedies of René Clair in the thirties, Renoir's FRENCH CAN-CAN, Démy's films. But whereas Clair's work comes essentially from the operetta (as do Lubitsch's musicals with M. Chevalier), both the Renoir film and especially Démy show a marked influence of the American musical.

In Hollywood, the musical became a genre in its own right when it started to fill the place left vacant by the almost overnight disappearance of the slapstick comedies with the advent of sound. The historical connection between slapstick and musical is neatly made in Donen's SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, which is in many ways about the genesis of the musical as a cinematic form. Its three main characters are symbolic of the different strands of the tradition: a stunt-man of the slapstick becomes silent star, and, with the coming of the talkies, has to change his style and play his fancy romantic roles for laughs. Likewise, a gag-man and acrobat becomes librettist and choreographer. And the girl advances from revue girl to singing star and dancing partner, ousting the leading lady with the impossible voice.

But before the genre could take such a retrospective - nostalgic look at itself in 1952, a whole epoch of the musical had already passed, an epoch which many film historians persist in seeing as the 'real' era of the musical. Witness Philip Jenkinson at the NFT or Kracauer who describes it as "... an improbable composite of songs in operetta fashion, colourful ballets borrowed from the music hall, bits of comedy dialogue ... It pretends to unity and threatens to fall into pieces. No one could honestly say that a musical makes sense. Yet it may be great entertainment, even cinematic entertainment at that". This is what he has to say in his 'Theory of Film' (1960) about the musical until '33. What comes after is dismissed with a laconic "... and so it goes on". (p. 146/7)

For us, these musicals of the thirties - often a string of revue numbers, in which armies of identical girls go through elaborate routines - belong, properly speaking, to the archeology of the genre: Lloyd Bacon, Mervyn LeRoy and Busby Berkeley made their musicals as if it was a question of arithmetically multiplying the talents of a choreographer, a virtuoso cameraman, and sophisticated and skilful dancers. To quote R. Benayoun, such films represented the 'triumph of functional voyeurism', with every cinematic trick marshalled in the service of the purely visual effect. In a certain sense, the musical of the thirties had achieved a standard of technical accomplishment that was way ahead of the artistic use to which it was put. It just waited to be taken over by an 'auteur' to realize its potential as a specific mode of cinematic expression.

*

The intermediary step from technical exercise to artistic form was helped by the emergence of a dancing partnership of genius, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, who 'personalized' the inherent formalism and introduced a dramatic dualism which could later be developed into a coherent 'story'. Although in films like GAY DIVORCE and TOP HAT (Mark Sandrich '34/'35) the numbers are still self-contained and almost autonomous, there was an increasing distinction between musical background and (melo)dramatic foreground.

As the musical setting began to form the counterpoint to a sentimental action, the dance-routines and duets focused on the individual protagonists, whose emotional involvements were highlighted by becoming both sublimated and objectified: dance-movement, musical rhythm, colour of costumes and décor came to stand in place of verbal articulation - on the simplest level, to express one character falling in love with another ('Say it with Music' - or as Sarris puts it 'Girl And Boy Feel A Song Coming On'). These 'objectifications' of emotional impulses constitute the core of the genre, and they codify the elements of a historical development into a readily accessible cinematic language. To sum up and simplify an intricate process, one can say that it is at this stage that the task of the metteur-en-scene becomes decisive, namely the cinematic reformulation of 'contents' (emotions, ideas, attitudes, values) into the language of the genre, which in the musical means their transposition into 'pure' sensory qualities, i.e. experiences of colour, motion and sound. (It is important in this context to realize that the function of music in the cinema is that of a decorative or contributory element alongside others. This means that the score of a musical draws its value and significance from the film it interprets, not vice versa.)

Bazin once remarked, on the subject of eroticism in the cinema, how the most erotic moments are achieved precisely by such visual sublimations of direct statements, and he quotes the scene of Marilyn Monroe having her skirts blown up to her thighs by the hot air over a subway ventilation shaft in Billy Wilder's THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH. This ability to 'think' everything in terms of the cinema is particularly necessary in the musical, and as Bazin also pointed out, it requires an extraordinary refinement and subtlety of the imagination, which in the case of the American cinema stems from a long, rich and byzantine culture of saying obliquely what cannot be formulated or shown explicitly, either because of a puritannical censorship or the need to level out the different cultural and educational expectations of audiences. The great object-lesson that the American cinema teaches is that this necessity, far from excluding delicacy and sensibility, is ultimately an aesthetic one, applying to all cinema that understands itself as art, i.e. as a coherent structure of significant articulations, for it imposes an overall visual conception, and introduces the notion of style as the central aesthetic vehicle of meaning. The resulting proliferation of gestural, mimic, decorative codes is what makes the American cinema such a rich mine for semiological field work, to which must naturally be added the conceptualizing function implicit in the mobility of the camera.

*

That the musical, along with other genres, has or had an ideological (during the depression in the thirties perhaps even a sociological) function, cannot be denied. Above all, the cult of décor and setting encourages a degree of projection, of vicarious participation in an unreal universe that lends itself only too easily to an exploitation of escapist mythologies, or the manipulation of social contents by mystifying the nature of the issues involved. But firstly, one

must guard against confusing the unreal with the imaginary, and in the musical it is often an appeal to the subconscious forces of the imagination in the face of restrictive social forms that liberates the character from his miserable condition. (For example, the outstanding feature of Minnelli's films is that they are built precisely on this distinction between unreal and imaginary. They constantly exalt the imagination by debunking or showing up the unreality of a setting in which are reflected the images of false social values.) Secondly, the manipulative element is so pervasive in all visual media that the charge has no specific force with regards to the musical, and one might even argue that TV-techniques and reportage realism represent far more insidious forms of manipulating one's awareness of reality by systematically presenting a conceptual universe of images (montage, selection, commentary), which nevertheless carries the visual stamp ('taken on the spot') and the social sanctions ('relayed by the BBC') of a spurious authenticity. By comparison, the spectacles of splendour and luxury of the Hollywood dream-factory are innocuous - indeed, because moving in a universe of patently symbolic forms (stereotypes, signs, icons) such films can penetrate to a level where communication becomes once more valid, because its use as discourse (whether emotional or other) is regulated by the conventions of the genre, which even an unsophisticated audience quickly learns to decipher. As Godard said à propos reality in the cinema: "le cinéma n'est pas une réflexion de la réalité, c'est la réalité d'une réflexion".

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On the other hand, one can see more and more clearly how the cathartic function of the Hollywood movie - the release of frustration and the suspension of alienation (i.e. the emotional sub-structure of a social condition) implied a very precise knowledge of the psychological mechanism and emotional pattern of responses prevalent in a given society, and the notorious sensitivity of the industry to the sociological factors involved in its relation to cinema audiences is nothing like as crude as the supply-and-demand rule so hastily assumed by sociologists - at any rate not on the level of the artists who actually make the films. Social history is being written in Hollywood - but in the form of art, and not with the facts and figures issued by the Motion Picture Guild. Thus, the work of the great directors of musicals and comedies shows an acute awareness of reality, and often the mise-en-scene subverts the expectations of the genre, by constantly emphasizing contradictions, controlling emotional responses and relativizing seemingly monolithic preconceptions. Genre - or stock-situations - are transcended by the way they are integrated into a significant structure, repeated, elaborated, modified (every Hollywood 'auteur' is an expert in the psychology of perception), and a film reflects ideally a wholly specific (if not necessarily 'personal') vision of the material. Despite its high stylistic determinism, the musical, perhaps mainly because of its loose narrative texture, seems to make special demands on the metteur-en-scene if it is to be coherent. Rare therefore are the musicals where all the disparate elements have a meaningful and integrated relation to the whole and where the musical expresses something which no other art-form could convey. Charles Walters, Mervyn LeRoy, Richard Quine and others have occasionally produced a masterpiece. But apart from George Cukor, the only directors whose entire oeuvre reflects the musical and defines its potential are Vincente Minnelli and Stanley Donen.

T.E.

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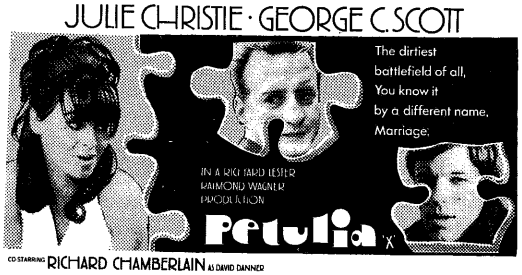
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STANLEY DONEN

Re-evaluation of the work of Stanley Donen is long overdue; and, (not that any excuse is really necessary), since four of his best films have recently appeared on television - SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, THE GRASS IS GREENER, IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER and FUNNY FACE - this article will take the opportunity of attempting to set out briefly the main stylistic and thematic concerns of this major figure of the American cinema. Donen's collaboration with such celebrated personalities of the musical genre as Gene Kelly, Michael Kidd and George Abbott have led to his dismissal as a competent metteur-en-scene of other's ideas, a 'genial catalyst' (Andrew Sarris). Serious analysis of his movies will, I think, prove this accusation unjust; he is the effective author of his work.

Working within a genre in the American Cinema implies the acceptance of a certain tradition, a certain stylistic and thematic eclecticism. This tradition is either seminal or restrictive, depending on the talent of the director involved, but it poses a problem for the critic; namely, to discover where the traditions of the genre end, and the individual treatment of the director commences. For example, the theme of identity, of attainment, of maturity through the attrition of opposite polarities, is one with which the American cinema in general, and the musical comedy genre in particular, is concerned. Now this theme forms the axis of such celebrated American musicals as SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (1952), GIVE A GIRL A BREAK (1953), SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS (1954), IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER (1955), and FUNNY FACE (1957). That all these films are created by Stanley Donen* does not necessarily mean that the theme is in any way personal to him; it is represented, to varying degrees in the work of such musical comedy directors as George Cukor, Charles Walters and George Sidney. Thus what becomes important in watching these movies is the treatment of the theme in the mise-en-scene; the personal vision with which Donen rejuvenates this most traditional of subjects, in the realization. Donen is above all a genre artist, but this can by no means be construed as a criticism of his work, because, paradoxically, he uses the genre to transcend itself. His artistry extends outside the musical, into the comedy and comedy-thriller genres - THE GRASS IS GREENER (1960), CHARADE (1963), TWO FOR THE ROAD (1968) - although the first offering of his own production company, STAIRCASE, would seem to suggest that he has joined other American directors, Fuller and Aldrich among them, who, freed from the confines of the genre system, have descended into self-conscious banality. At heart, as Robert Benayoun has correctly pointed out, Donen is a choreographer, whose own distinctive style integrates, without detraction from its own personality, the talents of other choreographers, Michael Kidd (SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS), and Bob Fosse (GIVE A GIRL A BREAK). This genre theme of identity, expressed through a sequence of dance-routines which represent the organic progression of the characters to maturity, is incorporated, then, into Donen's vision by his mise-en-scene, which at every turn provides grades of visual metaphor for the condition of his protagonists. The intense physical exuberance which characterizes the cinema of Donen is a catalyst for his personal dialectic, never a substitute for life. Finally the characters attain truth, realise awareness; like the curtain raised from behind Jean Hagen to reveal Debbie Reynolds, the voice behind the face, in the closing moments of SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, reality is revealed. For Donen, unlike Minnelli, this is good enough.

Donen's cinema, then, is constructed around the traditions of the musical genre, continually interpreting and moulding these traditions into a personal vision. The structure of this vision comprises a large segment of the personal treatment - it is composed of a classical gradation, within which two opposite polarities, an excessive rationalization and an irresponsible impulsiveness, compromise, revealing and accepting their respective inadequacies. The rationalization is exemplified by the female lead - emotionally inhibited, and inexperienced. The impulsiveness is embodied in the male lead, adventurous and egocentric. The Jane Powell character in SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS is perhaps the only exception to this case in Donen's œuvre; mature in her attitudes - after surmounting her disgust and surprise at finding the situation with which she has to cope - she acts as the agent in reconciling the antagonists. However, the distinctiveness in Donen's work resides to a large extent in the definite grid of situations, on which the gradation of his movies is based. Space prevents me from illustrating this grid across Donen's complete works; I must satisfy myself with two examples, IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER, and SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS. The former, on which Donen shares directorial credit with star Gene Kelly, recently re-appeared on television, while the latter, which he directed alone, was granted a nationwide re-release not so long ago.

Basically, the gradation consists of five 'movements', five situations through which the action organically progresses to its climax. (1) The celebration of an irresponsible individuality (2) The complete absence of movement (3) The crude re-initiation into movement; this phase is usually shot by Donen using a split screen technique, which implies a communication between characters, but a communication which is as yet unfulfilled i.e. the 'Bonjour Paris' number in FUNNY FACE (4) The commencement of the return to movement; usually expressed by Donen in a very physical rejection of artificiality and rationalization i.e. the humiliation of the speech-instructor in SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (5) The re-discovery of physical movement; usually a brilliantly-choreographed but apparently chaotic action sequence, which becomes, as it were, a purging of irresponsibility by a final indulgence in it. Thus Donen

*Space prevents me, unfortunately, from embarking on a serious analysis of the Kelly-Donen collaboration. The evidence of the three movies on which they collaborated, and their respective œuvres after their separation, must surely indicate the dominance of Donen's personality. Donen's solo musicals are infinitely superior to Kelly's; but an individual comparison is more enlightening. Donen's comic sense and lightness of touch rejuvenated what threatened to be a hollow exercise in quasi-sophistication (TWO FOR THE ROAD), while Kelly was swamped by that same suavity (GUIDE TO THE MARRIED MAN). Kelly's contribution to the films, as a performer, was enormous; he remains however an interpreter of the mise-en-scene, not a creator.

prefers to stage, for example, a fight rather than an ordered dance-routine.

IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER represents the most classical example of this gradation in the work of Donen; an illustration of it in this film goes as follows: (1) The drunken dance of the three GI's which forms the opening of the movie, before they realise that they are civilians and must therefore separate. (2) The dirge-like song in Tim's Bar, shot with an almost completely static camera. (3) Cyd Charisse's dance in Stillman's gym; the dance of Gene Kelly, Dan Dailey and Michael Kidd, shot in three separate frames. (4) Dan Dailey's drunken, anarchic rejection and humiliation of his business associates; Gene Kelly's dance on roller skates, after he has escaped from the gangsters. (5) The fight in the television studio.

In SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS, the pattern remains the same, although it is not perhaps executed with the same balanced sense of structure which Donen demonstrates in the former film: (1) The barn dance; the dancing of the brothers is here intensely physical and individualistic - effective example of how Donen assimilates the choreography of Michael Kidd, muscular and gymnastic. The inability of the brothers to conduct themselves in a responsible fashion, much to the shame of Jane Powell, shows itself in the sequence during which the barn is to be constructed, by rival teams. When their competitors, realizing that they are considerably inferior in strength, try to hinder the seven brothers with violence, a fight erupts. Donen pulls back his camera; the barn, metaphor for the erstwhile constructive and responsible attitude of the brothers, collapses, as they revert to their more primitive instincts. (2) The dirge-like song in the snow, to the rhythm of the falling axes; the brothers are unable to continue their agricultural work in a satisfactory fashion, as all have fallen in love with the respective girls that they met at the barn-dance. (3) The capture of the girls; the despair of the family is alleviated by the eldest, Adam (Howard Keel), husband of Millie (Jane Powell), who has read in one of Millie's books of the historical incident known as the Rape of the Sabine Women. These books act as effective symbols of Millie's attitude, matured by education. The brothers thus capture the girls from their homes, and the posse following them is prevented from reaching them by an avalanche, which blocks the pass. The brothers can only thus be reached in the spring, when the pass thaws. (4) After a period during which the girls ignore the brothers, spring comes, and with it the visual embodiments of that season. The individual relationships demonstrate a maturity arising from realization of emotional responsibility. (5) The final chaotic fight-chase; the town's people arrive to hang the brothers and a fight ensues before order is restored and the marriage ceremony effected.

Variants of this grid appear throughout Donen's work, but the basic pattern remains the same. What is important, however, is that the situations which compose the grid are in essence, genre situations, absorbed by the director from the traditions of that genre and transfused into a personal structure. For example, if we take a fairly representative example of the genre, LET'S MAKE LOVE (1960) of George Cukor, we find a similar humiliation sequence as is found in Donen's movies, where millionaire Yves Montand's air of authority is destroyed by his pathetic attempts to become, under expert tuition, a comedian, a singer and a dancer respectively. Yet, while we laugh at the scene in the Cukor movie, an extra dimension is added when the similar scene is found in the work of Donen, for it is instantly recognizable as an integral segment of the movement towards maturity which is so personal to him. When Doug Hallerton (Dan Dailey) begins his rediscovery of physical action in IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER, while it is an intensely comic movement, Donen also evokes an extraordinary pathos, for we recognize the desperation endemic in the character's action. His zany clowning, his physical movement, all is reinforced by the spectator's knowledge that this episode is crucial to his life, for it entails a complete repudiation of the last ten years. His material 'success' (when asked by Gene Kelly if he still paints - as he did when he was in the army - he replies 'no, but I've been creative in the advertising line'), during the intervening years since he was discharged is shattered as surely as is the crockery that he pulls off the dinner table when he attempts to repeat his tablecloth trick. Then, after the friend's rediscovery of physical movement, the climax of which has been recorded on television, he telephones his wife Dorothy who, as we have gathered, is about to leave him. Tentatively he expresses his love for her, and his realization of error; his conversation is on the level of a boy dating his first girl, and this re-emphasis on the need to remain natural, at whatever material lost, capitalizes on the robust nature of the final fight-dance. Thus, we can see that Donen's talent resides in his ability to express the inherent seriousness of his thematic in the guise of the most physical dance routines. The traditional elements of the scenaria are transcended in the realization that such scenes are vital to his organic conception of theme.

Physical movement, then, is seen to be infinitely important to Donen, on account of its nature as catalyst for the development of his characters. In perfect accord, Donen's visual style, and his choreography, are immediately physical. Perhaps the most satisfactory method of demonstrating this exuberance is by placing a sequence from a Donen movie, FUNNY FACE, alongside a comparable scene from a work by Minnelli, GIGI; comparison will provide insight into Donen's method, and elucidate the very immediate nature of his style.

The scene from FUNNY FACE occurs at an early stage, when Audrey Hepburn perceives the emotional effect of her meeting with fashion photographer Richard Avery (Fred Astaire), how the brash intrusion of a disparate existence has inexorably altered her own attitudes. A fashion team, in need of a novel environment for their photographs, invade the bookshop in which Hepburn works, a high, dusty room in dingy colours, whose walls are obscured by bookshelves. The deliberate clash of the pink of the model's clothes on the shabby décor represents the violence of the intrusion; it silhouettes the emotional claustrophobia of the girls quasi-intellectual ambience. Afterwards, with the bookshop in total disorder, Hepburn, realizing her spontaneous attraction to the photographer, picks up the model's pink veil, left behind on the shop floor, and begins the number 'When did this all begin?'. She has been brutally forced to acknowledge another existence outside her own. Thus as she begins to move her body, to discover rhythm and movement, her tentative initiation is expressed by Donen through the equivalent hesitancy of the mise-en-scene. Then, as the number rises to its climax, Donen cuts to a high-angle shot, as Hepburn stands isolated at the centre of the room, dancing, the pink veil the centre of attraction, the source of light, in the dark room, an exhilarating metaphor for the triumph of movement over stasis, the effectiveness of which resides in the essential subjectivity of Donen's style, hesitant when his character is hesitant, rhythmic when she is liberated.

The scene from GIGI, which provides an illuminating comparison of Donen's method with Minnelli's comes when Louis Jourdan, unsure of the nature of his emotional attachment to the young girl, sings the title song, in the Jardins du Luxembourg. At the beginning of the song, Minnelli silhouettes Jourdan against the implacable, inanimate blue-grey of the fountains and statues - images which express the lack of vitality in the character's world-weary cynicism. However, when the song reaches its climax - the point at which Jourdan

acknowledges his sentiments towards Gigi - Minnelli, in a slow tracking-shot, frames his character as he walks across a bridge into a more natural, fertile ambience, symbolizing the very vitality which attracts him to the girl. (The peculiarly misanthropic conclusion of GIGI - the emotional capitulation of the girl and her incorporation into the cynical, superficial world of Jourdan - in no way detracts from the power of the character's development at this point). In the sequence, Minnelli concentrates the visual illustration of his character's emotional progression in the décor and the environment; his use of camera movement is unobtrusive, because his own specific preoccupations in the cinema are not suited to the subjectivity of the camera as perpetrated by Donen - his specific task is the creation of a world, a 'liberated universe' (Thomas Elsaesser, BFR No. 15). For Donen, however, the movements of the camera represent another source of emphasis - indicating the mood of the protagonists and developing it.

While perpetuating his thematic preoccupations, it is a measure of Donen's scrupulousness as an artist that he ceaselessly investigates the validity of the cinematic medium as the medium for postulating them. For the cinema, above all the other arts, is the medium of illusion; this is a primary, essential factor in the method of Donen's realizations. In GIVE A GIRL A BREAK, he devotes his film to an exploration of three relationships, all three ramified into two disparate aspects; on the one hand, the reality of the three girls competing for the star part in a Broadway musical, and on the other the illusion created around them by the three men who admire and promote their own favourite as the ideal for that part. As a result, until the illusion/reality dichotomy establishes the final priorities, the relationships are threatened with complete destruction, due to their lack of responsible foundation. In order to investigate then, the validity of the cinematic medium, and, more specifically the photographic image, three of Donen's most important musicals, SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER, and FUNNY FACE are concerned, wholly or partly, with situations based, respectively, around the cinema, television, and still photography. In SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, Donen demonstrates the distortion of truth and the substitution of illusion in the cinema; when the audience believes itself to see one individual, it may be seeing another. For commercial exploitation, the voice of Debbie Reynolds is substituted for the voice of Jean Hagen. In IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER, the final fight, which we recognize as the climax of an emotional progression which is vitally important to the characters concerned, is set in a television studio, and prefaced by the scrupulously manufactured illusion of wealth and well-being exemplified by Dolores Gray's number. Ironically, the personal intimations of the fight are, naturally, lost on the television audience, and the spontaneous excitement it causes is the reason for the renewed success of the show, 'Midnight with Madeleine'. The ambiguity of the photographic image, the difficulty of distinguishing between truth and illusion, is demonstrated by Donen when he shows the television monitors recording the programme; on one screen is seen the carefully-rehearsed show being enacted, while, on the other, Ted Riley (Gene Kelly) tries to bluff gangsters who are going to kill him. But it is perhaps in FUNNY FACE that Donen analyses most rigorously his own artistic position.

The narrative of FUNNY FACE is precipitated by the Fred Astaire character, a fashion photographer who, bored with the mundane, lifeless models who are employed by his magazine, wishes to create a new image, wishes to rejuvenate what he regards as a dying profession with a novel vitality. Audrey Hepburn is the girl he chooses, and, in an extraordinary scene, in his dark-room, he seems to create a new face, an image that is uniquely his own. But behind his obsession with this image of Hepburn's 'Funny face', is a real obsession with the erasion of reality; he is a magician who, discontented with the reality he sees, discards it in favour of the reality he wishes to create. He prefers his own photographic creations to truth. In the portrayal of this character, Donen courageously faces the fundamental problem of the cinema-director; whether to content oneself with the creation of illusion, or to demonstrate truth, paradoxically, through this illusion. The problem is especially forthcoming to the director of musicals, for he is the creator of spectacle. At the moment when the protagonists dance, in the midst of a specifically created environment, the spectacle assumes a reality of its own, which is not vitiated by one's overall sense of the cinema as the art of illusion, because this spectacle overrules everything outside the immediate experience. The development and conclusion of FUNNY FACE denotes, in rigorous terms, Donen's response to the challenge of spectacle. In the scenes during which Astaire is photographing Hepburn, in the new fashions which the magazine is going to 'scoop', he tries to aid her interpretation of the manner in which she wears the clothes, by setting her in a fictional situation, which provides a key to the attitude he desires her to adopt. Thus, at the railway station, swathed in furs, Astaire tells her that she is a Countess, awaiting a lover who never arrives. Such is the sincerity of the girl that she actually places herself in the position of that Countess; she cries. Her genuineness, her inability to falsify transcends the inherent illusion of the photographs, and this transcendence is the metaphor for the method of Donen. Paradoxically, he uses the medium of illusion to illustrate reality, the art of falsity to demonstrate truth. Throughout his work, his characters reach the final conclusions about themselves - they progress to an awareness of themselves. Such is his regard for his characters that, even in such a flawed work as ARABESQUE (1966), Donen can, in as serious a manner as possible, demonstrate the emotional and moral advancement of the university professor who is an expert in hieroglyphics through his involvement with an espionage ring to an awareness, achieved ultimately through the chaotic action of the climax. That the familiar grid is apparent in such a film is an apt testimony to the personal preoccupation of the director.

Constantly, one is aware that Donen is the enemy of dishonesty, of irresponsibility, of excessive erudition. His characters develop from what is basically an isolationist view point to an involvement with fellow human beings, to an emotional and moral accountability. The structure of this progression towards involvement is a classical one, towards equilibrium, a dialectic in which physical movement provides the catalyst for the character's inherent mutability. It is the indigenous spark inside each of the protagonists, the capacity for movement, which leads to the final maturity. We recall Audrey Hepburn's first encounter with motion in FUNNY FACE; as the fashion team invade the bookshop, the sliding ladder, at the very summit of which she is balancing, in order to place some books on one of the high shelves, is accidentally pushed. The experience is, naturally, a jolting and unpleasant one; but it is the beginning of an organic gradation through which she will discover an existence which is perfectly integrated with Donen's vertiginous camera movements, and with this existence, the extreme fortune of finding herself.

PETER LLOYD

VINCENTE MINNELLI (part2)

Minnelli's films invariably focus on the discrepancy between an inner vision, often confused and uncertain of itself, and an outer world that appears as hostile because it is presented as a physical space littered with obstacles. Life forces upon the characters a barely tolerable sense of rupture, and the Minnelli universe has its psychological raison d'être in a very definite and pervasive alienation. But instead of lamenting this modern condition, almost all his films concentrate on portraying the energies of the imagination released in the individual during this process of (social?) decomposition. Too often this has been seen merely as a total abandon to the faculty of make-belief, of the beautiful appearance through which Minnelli is supposed to celebrate Hollywood escapism.

This view, even if applied to the musicals only, is an untenable simplification. Minnelli's concern is always with the possibilities of a human creativeness asserting itself in and through a world which is so obviously imperfect. True, the imperfections are taken for granted, they are global, because Minnelli is dealing not with a given reality, but with the psychological and emotional predicament it produces. Two types of heroes come to symbolize this situation: the artist and the neurotic, two ways of dealing with the actual which are obviously not unrelated. That he sees them as intimately connected states of being constitutes the coherence of his moral vision and the unity of his themes.

Whereas the 'neurotic' dilemma is either treated comically (THE LONG LONG TRAILER, the dream becoming a nightmare, or GOODBYE CHARLIE, in which the hero is so traumatized by American society that he involuntarily undergoes a sex-change) or tragically (HOME FROM THE HILL, THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE), art and neurosis form the explicit subject of THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL, LUST FOR LIFE, TWO WEEKS IN ANOTHER TOWN. Even in the musicals, where the triumph of the creative temperament seems assured, it is not by a 'naive' assertion of will-power or happy-go-lucky bonhomie, but through a complex process of metamorphosis which transforms both the individual and his world. For the inner vision is essentially flawed, and so long as the protagonist cuts himself off from life, his dream is static, a passive nostalgia or worse, a self-limiting delusion. As a consequence, the external world seems to him nothing but oppressive, false and alien - an attitude which none of Minnelli's films vindicate as an adequate response, though they often make it their starting point.

Three of Minnelli's greatest musicals, THE PIRATE, BRIGADOON and THE BANDWAGON open with such typical situations of the 'self-en-exile'. In THE PIRATE Judy Garland, about to be married to a fat, wealthy businessman, sighs over her fate and looks romantically into the distance while dreaming of Macoco, the legendary Caribbean pirate to take her away. In BRIGADOON, a disenchanted Gene Kelly, playing an American tourist, stalks about in Scotland, having lost his way in the wilderness of the Highlands. And in THE BANDWAGON, Fred Astaire in the role of a once-famous star, gets off the train in New York to discover that the big party at the station is cheering some other celebrity.

Though these may seem archetypal situations of the genre, they recur in all of Minnelli's films, whether musical or not. THE COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER is a particularly striking example, with father and son feeling completely lost in their own home (a family situation common to at least a dozen Minnelli films). And the implications are finally made explicit in TWO WEEKS IN ANOTHER TOWN, where the hero is first seen in a mental hospital. In other words, Minnelli starts from a characteristic disorientation about the relation of self and world, from which originates the impulse towards action. Whatever his protagonists do becomes therefore automatically identified with a desire to realize themselves by transcending an indifferent or restrictive environment.

This makes the Minnelli character live in the tension of a necessary isolation and an inevitable drive towards domination. It is as such a central theme of the American cinema. But whereas one easily assumes this to be in Minnelli's earlier films an exclusively aesthetic concern - a need for beauty, for living out a romantic fantasy - the moral dimension is never obscured. And if the very early films do emphasize the final articulation of a harmony, the later ones turn to the ambiguous conditions of the creative will itself, whether in the form of a self-destructive obsession (LUST FOR LIFE), a manic manipulation of others (THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL) or a tenacious determination (HOME FROM THE HILL).

In some of the earlier films, for example, Minnelli's attitude can be seen to alternate between an optimism about the individual's potential to make the world conform to his dreams, and an equally acute sense of the tyranny over others implicit in its realization. But this is never blown up to the dimensions of ponderous moralizing, on the contrary, it is always contained in the insignificant story, the unprepossessing event. In MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, for example, near-tragedy ensues when the father of the heroine decides to move his family to New York, and thus to uproot them from their small self-contained world. It is the typical Minnelli dilemma of the will of the individual opposed to the always fragile fabric of human harmony. The father's announcement of his intention falls on the family like a spell, and their world is visibly coming to a halt. Finally, the father relents, they stay, and, in a very complicated camera-movement, Minnelli conveys the precise feeling of a rhythm recommencing, and the characters 'circulate' once more through the house as if their blood had begun to flow again, with gestures and movements that approximate a graceful dance. By contrast, in FATHER OF THE BRIDE, the same situation is inverted, and Spencer Tracy as the father, is progressivly more exiled from his own home because of the banal and conventional ideas and preconceptions which his wife and daughter are trying to foster upon him.

The clearest expression of a corresponding optimism is UNDER THE CLOCK. It is the story of a GI on a 24-hour leave and a girl from the country who happen to meet in a railway station. In this film, full of the most unpromising stereotype material, Minnelli magnificently communicates the elements of his vision. For example, the obligatory stroll through Central Park becomes the pivot where the real New York in all its oppressive strangeness transforms itself into an integral part of the couple's experience of themselves. As they listen to the bewildering noise of the city, the sounds merge into a kind of music, and through its rhythm, the couple find towards each other - the city literally brings them

together. This is important, because the film is built on the tension between the fatality of the Clock, the diffuse chaos of the city, and the will of the lovers. Against a world circumscribed by time and ruled by chance (their initial encounter, the various accidental separations, the careless indifference that surrounds them), Minnelli sets the determination of the couple to realize a common happiness. Insignificant though they are in the human sea, their naive trust in love-at-first-sight appears as heroic because it is supported by a belief in the human will and its power to transcend the given. Judy Garland and Robert Walker here exemplify the Minnelli 'philosophy' par excellence: the freedom of the individual, his creative potential, consists in perceiving order and design in chaos, whose meaning is revealed when it becomes dance. The film opens with a crane shot into the crowd at Pennsylvania station, showing only aimless movement. It ends with the camera tracking out from the station, and as Judy Garland is seen walking away, even the crowd has a regular flow and a definite rhythm.

Although the polarity between two worlds, or world-views is Minnelli's central structural device, the meaning of the themes is defined by the nature of the energy which the characters bring to bear on the world as they find it. The spectrum is wide, with innumerable shades and variations. Whether it is the genteel 'joie de vivre' of MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, the instinctive stubbornness of Eddie in THE COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER, the dream of a luxury caravan (THE LONG LONG TRAILER), or the fantasy life of a switchboard girl (BELLS ARE RINGING) - common to all of them is the sense that without this energy the world would always disintegrate into mere chaos.

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As with many Hollywood directors, the basic purpose of Minnelli's handling of visual elements is to encourage audience identification. But no other director has such a keen and differentiated eye for the mesmerizing qualities of a setting, a particular décor. Not inappropriately, the French critic Domarchi once compared Minnelli to Hitchcock, saying their conception of the cinema is 'alchemistic'; the elements of Minnelli's mise-en-scene are indeed geared towards producing an overall impression of unreality, wholly engrossing the spectator by a sense of timing and a fluidity of movement which exaggerates the natural relativity of time and space in the cinema to a point where the visual spectacle becomes a kind of hallucination.

This means that the mechanism of identification (or projection) normally understood rather crudely as referring only to the audience's empathy with the protagonist, is amplified to include the setting, which no longer functions as an objective point of correlation, but becomes wholly absorbed into the action as the natural extension of the protagonist's being. The characterization of the Minnelli hero therefore reduces itself to the barest outlines of a specific individuality. His role is to indicate a sequence of psychological situations of general significance, and not to illustrate the ramifications of a unique case. What matters is not his character (i.e. his moral principles, his credibility as a rational and sentient human being) but his personality (i.e. the set of attitudes and physical responses he displays in given situations).

Where it is a question of substantiating or explaining a human relationship in terms of psychological motivation, Minnelli therefore invariably presents the conflict as a clash of settings, an imbalance of stylistic elements, such as a contrast of movements or a disharmony of colours or objects. The bright yellow caravan in the landscape of THE LONG LONG TRAILER, for example, jars so painfully that in itself it suffices to undermine the couple's pretensions to a free and natural life. At other times the violence of a gesture is set off against an otherwise smooth or harmonious visual surface, and when Barry Sullivan in one of the opening scenes of THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL slams down the telephone, an incongruous but highly dramatic contrast is created in opposition to the dream-like setting in which Lana Turner is being filmed by a camera-crew. Minnelli constantly reduces his stories to their moments of visual intensity, where he can project the dramatic conflicts into the décor. Where other directors use the cinematic space to clarify the intellectual complexities of their plots (Preminger, Lang), Minnelli relates distance (or lack of distance) to varying degrees of subjective intensity. Thus, an important function of the mise-en-scene is to interiorize the rapport that exists between spectator and action, by reproducing a similar tension of identification and projection within the film itself - achieved very often by a typically Minnellian camera movement which consists of an unobtrusive, but very fluid travelling forward, interrupted by an almost imperceptible craning away usually held as a general shot until the fade-out. This makes the Minnelli hero emerge in many ways as the creator and spectator of his own life, realizing himself most fully in a world which he can transcend by using it as the décor of his own mise-en-scene.

Conversely, the moment of rupture - doubt, despair, nightmare - is equally dramatized in the interrelation of hero and environment, and the world of objects becomes either solid, immobile or bristling with a recalcitrant life of its own.

In these cases, it is the gesture, sometimes aggressive, more often hesitant, which is extended into the alien territory that defines the protagonist's sense of personal identity, and the most subtle changes in his state of mind are relayed through his position and behaviour vis à vis the setting. Barry Boys in an article on THE COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER has given a fine analysis of the opening of the film, with Eddie precariously poised in the once familiar kitchen, that through the death of his mother has become a hostile world.

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This means that there is an obvious analogy between the approach of his characters to their predicament and the cinematic medium. Thus the mechanism of projection and identification are reflected in Minnelli's films as the two phases of a character's development: projection of his vision upon an environment, identification (or breakdown of an identification) with a décor, a created world.

In the musicals, where the characteristics of Minnelli's cinema are most transparent, one can see a kind of recurrent pattern of situations which forms the archetypal Minnelli structure (what differentiates his non-musical films is mainly that though these situations are present, they are not necessarily in that order): 1. The moment of isolation (the individual vision as imprisonment) 2. The tentative communication (the vision materializes as décor) 3. The rupture (the décor appears as mere appearance and delusion) 4. The world as chaos 5. The world as spectacle/the spectacle as world.

In a sense, this pattern represents a kind of catharsis of vision, to which corresponds the clarification of emotions through the purging of their opposites: what emerges from the contradictory impulses of solitude and euphoria, frustration, despair and delirious monomania is a measure of self-fulfilment, often merely implicit - where all emotional extremes feed into the creation of the 'show', and where the energy is finally disciplined in the movement of the dance. The classical example of this is THE PIRATE: Judy Garland,

dreaming of the pirate, sees Macoco materialize in Gene Kelly, only to discover that he is an imposter - a discovery that creates emotional chaos for her (she loves him all the same) and actual chaos on the island (there is a price on his head). Manuela, finally renouncing her romantic fantasies, joins Kelly's humble theatrical troupe, and the film ends with an ironic number, significantly entitled 'Be A Clown'.

Likewise, in BRIGADOON, Gene Kelly's desire for another world materializes in the legendary village of Brigadoon where he meets the girl of his life, only to discover that the whole village and its inhabitants will have to disappear again for another hundred years. He returns to New York, but the mad chaos in the fashionable bar makes him long so much for the enchanted world of Brigadoon that he returns to Scotland, and miraculously, Brigadoon appears once more, conjured up by his faith. But now Brigadoon is threatened by one of the inhabitants who wants to escape from the magic spell and live a 'real' life. The villagers hunt him down and he is finally killed. Gene Kelly on the other hand, marrying Fiona, his dream girl, accepts the 'unreality' of Brigadoon and is prepared to live for only a day every hundred years - metaphor for the artist living only through his art.

In THE BANDWAGON, too, the pattern is in evidence. Here it is particularly the different stages of Astaire's re-immersion into the world of showbusiness, the different and often disastrous shows, that liberate the character from his wholly egocentric projection, and by a series of debunking manoeuvres and parodies (e.g. the staging of 'Oedipus Rex'), Minnelli establishes the idea of the spectacle as the measure of things. This is summed up in the theme song 'That's Entertainment' which ends with: 'everything that happens in life/can happen in a show ... anything, anything can go/ - The world is a stage/the stage is a world/of entertainment'.

The notion of the artist as actor however not only relates the hero in a complex way to his environment, it also allows Minnelli to pursue the theme of artistic creativity into its most banal guises, where a common human denominator - the role playing of all social life - serves to illuminate what is after all normally considered a privileged state of being. An essentially artistic temperament is revealed in all those who - from switchboard girl to Hollywood tycoon - want to act upon a given reality, change it, transform the material of their lives through the energy of an idea, an obsession, or merely the tentative groping to live up to the boldness of their imagination. But this theme of an energy in search of a material form hardly ever communicates itself in Minnelli as achievement. On the contrary, it is radically relativized as process - a permanent becoming - and rhythm, gesture and colour are the properly cinematic signs of a spontaneous and contagious vitality, embodied in the musical as in no other genre.

Thus, despite the obvious difference between Judy Holliday's blunt vivaciousness in BELLS ARE RINGING and Leslie Caron's spiritual and graceful sensibility in GIGI, both films share the common drive for a liberation which inevitably leads to the spectacle, and both films are, in this sense, concerned with the ethics of the mise-en-scene - in one film understood as the (benevolent) influence on other people's lives, in the other as the assumption of a role in a formalized and stylized society. In BELLS ARE RINGING, Judy Holliday wants to play the good fairy to the clients of a telephone answering service, but at first, she creates merely confusion, chaos and mischief. But although her role-playing makes her seem unreal to herself, her clients eventually find together - to produce a theatre-play. In an important aspect, however, her predicament highlights one of the inspirations of Minelli's art. Through Judy Holliday's escapades we see a dichotomy between the richness of the American imagination and the restrictive force of a conventional morality. Significantly, the police handcuff her for her flight of fancy, ironic symbol of society's attitude to the creative artist.

If BELLS ARE RINGING concerns the responsibility of the metteur-en-scene, GIGI is an example of the apprenticeship of the mise-en-scene. Gigi has to learn how not to be natural, how to calculate her movement and judge the meaning of each gesture. She has to learn the conscious use of appearance, as a way of regaining a personal spontaneity and freedom through the language of social grace. In GIGI it is difficult to know how to take this aesthetic education - the colour symbolism tells the story of a degradation, with Gigi's red and green becoming gradually a merely fashionable mauve and pink. On the other hand, the process seems inevitable, and Minnelli obviously prefers a conscious grace to a false innocence. In this sense, GIGI more than any other film is about the commercial cinema. And by subjecting his inspiration to the rigors of the system, Minnelli himself seems to praise the chains that tie the Hollywood artist so often to the banal story, the vulgar sentiment, the platitudinous cliché. However, unlike other aesthetic moralists such as Ophuls or Renoir with whom he has much in common, Minelli has a wholly American reliance on an unbroken stream of vitality and energy. But as with them, what defines value for him is the conception of the world, not its material basis. In this sense, even the most 'unreal' of his melodramas or musical comedies acknowledges a level of existence, a dimension of the actual that many a European director studiously ignores, and which Hollywood itself seems to have lost under the impact of TV-style instant realism. Who is then to say whether Minnelli's aestheticism is pernicious mystification or not rather the realism of the truly cinematic artist?

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But Minnelli himself has dramatized the dilemma of film-making explicitly in his two films THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL and TWO WEEKS IN ANOTHER TOWN. In both films seemingly fundamental moral distinctions between art and life are seen to become more and more ambiguous, as the laws and conditions of film-making impose themselves on an already inauthentic model of life. The film-to-be, the artefact, assumes the dimensions of an inexorable necessity, exposing the moral flaws and human weaknesses of those involved in its creation - a banal point perhaps, had not Minnelli balanced this indictment of Hollywood in THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL by the dramatization of a grandiose, all-devouring obsession of an artist who spares neither himself nor others in order to remain true to his inspiration. Through the character of producer Jonathan Shields - cynical, cunning and demonic, who sacrifices everything in order to make films, Minnelli explores the nature of his own commitment to the cinema. Shields, by destroying their private lives, liberates the creative potential of his director, scriptwriter and leading lady, who had all been imprisoned by their petty worries and emotional fixations. THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL shows the visionary as the most ruthless realist, dominating a world with an energy so radical that it can only come from the intimate knowledge of its degradation.

Art as the destruction of 'ordinary' life - this is the central ambiguity which is at the heart of Minnelli's vision. And in LUST FOR LIFE, the film about Vincent Van Gogh, he pays homage to a greater artist, yet at the same time sharpens his own theme to its paroxism. The Nietzschean intensity of Van Gogh's vision, produces paintings of life as no human eye had ever seen it, but it is also a demonic urge that dissolves and severs all human bonds and finally destroys Van Gogh himself. In the film, the two sides are linked symbolically.

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Politics, Iconography and FILM

Europe 1900 - 45 : An Introduction

Professional historians began to take an interest in film in the 1920s. Between 1926 and 1932 in the International Historical Conferences there was a growing, if cautious, admission that film might be useful to the historian. In fact a commission was formed to deal with the problems of collecting and sorting material and called itself The International Iconographical Commission - a prescient title.

The words icon, iconic, and iconographical feature as problematic stars in the glittering semantic world of film criticism - I do not wish to challenge the semiologists on their own ground. But we must start with some definition and I will accept initially the one currently offered by Peter Wollen, based on the philosopher C. S. Peirce. An icon is fundamentally an image, a sign which represents its object by its similarity to it. A picture, a photograph, a film of Benito Mussolini is technically an icon, and the adjective iconic is used to describe shots which provide a more or less objective illusion of the object under study. The iconography of film in this sense is thus a heightened version of illusion in painting and photography and the more the real object recedes into the past the more the historian values the illusion which remains. For this reason, one visits the National Portrait Gallery to see what Oliver Cromwell or the Duke of Newcastle looked like - and who could portray Henry VIII now and not be after Holbein?

The Iconographical Commission in the 20s certainly had this use of film in mind - film as illusions of objective reality, of events and people, a visual version of newspapers. In the 30s it became apparent that images on film were also illusions of subjective reality - a visual version of memoirs, diaries and verbal propaganda. With such films as EARTH, CHAPAYEV and TRIUMPH OF THE WILL this aspect could not be missed. Again the parallel with representational painting or photography is easily drawn. Religious paintings or images of classical mythology mix subjective with objective reality: Giotto's angels would never have got off the ground and Boticelli's Venus would have sunk, but the perception of reality is acknowledged as relative and dependent on cultural myths and stereotypes and so too are the corresponding illusions. Thus film iconography, as an illusion of reality, conveys, like the painting, both identity and ideas. It leads outwards to fact and inwards to interpretation, and both directions lead to realities which occupy the historian.

To this extent the historical utility of film, like the utility of representational art, is unquestionable, but what is questionable is the extent of its utility and here historians have shown a passion for scepticism. Why?

Firstly, the trouble with film as an illusion of external reality, in the newspaper sense is that there is no equivalent of The Times or Le Monde. In a famous lecture given in 1955 and called The Film as Source Material for History, Sir Arthur Elton stated:

> "For at least the first thirty years the content of the newsreels was determined mainly by passing fads and fancies of the time ... Of scenes of one-legged men pushing turnips with their noses from Paris to Rome there is much; of boat races, crowned heads, bathing belles, railway smashes, the glossier phases of war, fashion parades, fires, murders and dance marathons, more; but on industry, technology, sociology, art, poetry, agriculture, only accidental glimpses. There are miles of men biting dogs, but much less of the stuff of history, dogs biting men ... Taking a parallel from written sources, it is as if the historian of the early 20th century had little more to guide him than the Daily Mirror, Old Moore's Almanac, Tit-Bits and a run of Nelson's Sevenpenny Novels."

Secondly, the film was born into the theatrical as well as the newspaper tradition. Its ancestry lies in marionette shows, in histrionics and entertainment as well as in camera reportage. The Lumière brothers may have made the first recognised film of workers emerging from their factory, but when shown to the crowds in a booth outside the Grand Café in 1895 it had the same spectacle value as the forty or so versions of silent Shakespeare filmed before 1914.

Thirdly, the film inherited the photograph's reputation for being a shallow and mechanistic art incapable of insight and analysis. An Italian critic in 1910 spoke of "the instantaneous photograph and its exasperating successor the cinema which breaks up life by tossing it about in a precipitous, but monotonous rhythm". Such scepticism, modified, of course, as the film matured, has left its legacy among historians, who demand from their sources more than a chronicle of daily life, more than entertainment and more than a mechanical reproduction.

Underlying it all is the historian's structural view of history which sees the 'real stuff' of history as deeply buried, to be dug out by tools which penetrate vertically; diplomatic records, memoirs of high officials, figures of consumption and production, memoranda of meetings and the incisive reporting or propaganda of newspapers and other literature. By comparison the rays of Lumière and his successors strike the surface and are diffused horizontally.

Exception is however made for the ideological films and most of the collaboration between historians and film experts to date have concentrated on Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. The iconography of film in this region, at least, is admitted to be of more than illustrative value.

But it seems that the whole debate on the utility of film got off to a wrong start, however well intentioned. The question the historian must ask is not only "What can film tell us about history?" but also "What was the role of film in history?". And the term iconography is even more significant here.

An icon in religious history performed a mass function. The abstractions of theology reach only a minority: the realism of icons made mass theology possible. As illusions of holy figures the images appeared to the believer as close to reality and through them were transmitted the ideas and values of the religion whose concepts he could not have grasped in verbal, discursive terms. They were also,

like all aspects of religious décor and ritual, unifying factors, creating or sustaining among a dispersed, heterogenous people a homogenous belief. For the art historian the style, the colour, the composition and the aesthetic power of the icon may be his main concerns, but for the historian it is the two-way relationship of the icon, to the religion itself and to the mass of believers, which is of primary importance.

An examination of film with this precedent in mind is not, I feel, either spurious or tendentious. In a century when the worst fears of Burke, Mill and Burckhardt among others have been realised, when mass politics have become a reality, the iconography of film has played a functional role. Through visual images the eclectic world of politics has been thrown open to mass involvement and this is the point to make the analogy between film and newspapers. The problems in fact of dealing with the two as agents in history are not dissimilar. There are the problems of measuring Russian peasant reaction to the propaganda of CHAPAYEV, of establishing whether the surrealist images of LE CHIEN ANDALOU were more than fantasies in the world of totalitarianism, of discovering whether the ETERNAL JEW created antisemitism or merely pandered to it, all the kinds of question one asks about the intention, content and effect of newspapers, or for that matter any medium of communication. This course will certainly raise these problems and it will, I think, provide evidence on three points:

1. Film for all its theatrical pretensions was early acknowledged as the ideal method for portraying reality. But because of its theatrical heritage and due to the process of cutting it also became the ideal method for distorting it, for the distortions were by methods in themselves realistic. Méliès discovered this potential before the end of the century.

> "I was filming in the Place de l'Opéra" he said "when suddenly my camera broke down. While I was mending it the scenes in the street naturally changed. But, once the camera was working again, without thinking I continued filming. Imagine then my surprise when I developed it. I had started by capturing the image of a bus emerging from the boulevard des Capucines and when it reached the boulevard des Italiens it was a hearse."

Like photomontage which appeared later in the Berlin Dada group of artists, the effect of cutting was to undermine conventional realism with realism itself. Values, prejudices, ideologies could be mounted as fact and fact could be presented in an evaluative, prejudiced or ideological way. The absurd could be made real and the real absurd.

Propaganda and ideology depend for their success on the arrangement of phenomena or ideas in such a way that they appear true. Film, based on an iconography that is closer than any other to reality, makes this arrangement comparatively simple. Only in a sophisticated audience is there resistance to cinema realism. The iconography of film, like religious icons in an age of faith, could accept the credulity of the audience.

2. The film also has played a unifying role in the societies of modern Europe. As a popular culture it has provided experience, ideas and references which can genuinely be called collective. In its cult of the personality it has provided objects for collective veneration. In Occupied France for example, film and film stars were promoted by the magazines to preserve a common talking point among Frenchmen who were rapidly dividing into resisters and collaborators; cinemas became meeting places, unaffected by the black-out, while American westerns, which predominated in the first two years, gave a blatant lesson in how to distinguish the good guys from the bad. If it is true since the war that contemporary societies are pluralistic, fragmented and diffused and that film by its variety has contributed to this diffusion, it is also true that film has nurtured and sustained a new form of homogeneity, a collective sense of things seen and experiences shared.

The propagandists used film explicitly for this purpose, not only in the totalitarian states. Grierson in his English documentaries saw his function as a propagandist in the following way, "We were interested", he wrote in 1939 "in all instruments which would crystallise sentiments in a muddled world and create a will towards civic participation" and on another occasion referring to his films "A mirror held up to nature is not so important in a dynamic and fast-changing world as the hammer which shapes it ... it is as a hammer, not as a mirror that I have sought to use the medium that came to my somewhat restive hand". The statement is clear: the obscurity begins when one attempts to discover whether or not the long list of English documentaries, such as HOUSING PROBLEMS, fulfilled Grierson's propaganda hopes. For that matter did TRIUMPH OF THE WILL succeed?

3. There is an ostensible connection as Grierson implies between a dynamic and changing world and film, whose essence is movement. The dynamic iconography of film would appear to be ideally suited to the régimes of the 20th century which have idolised action, change and the dynamism of their politics. Using photographs one could easily suggest that icons for the stability which Victorian society projected would be a 'sociable' chair from the 1851 exhibition with its sedate prudishness, the municipal splendour of Leeds Town Hall or the portrait of Mr and Mrs Gladstone, husband standing, wife sitting in perfect microcosm of the family order. Whereas for Mussolini's régime and the Third Reich with their creeds of action one could select images of movement and go on to suggest that film expressed the essence of Fascism and Nazism even more faithfully.

One could make this kind of selection, but with equal force one could emphasise the turning of the industrial wheels which powered Victorian expansion, and use photographs of the dictators to render the image of permanence and stability which they imprinted on their self-advertisements. The unmoving images of Fascism and Nazism placed on walls and hoardings formed a ubiquitous summary of the values of the régimes which film, less accessible and less menacing, could not achieve.

One is left looking for a more complex relationship between the iconography of film and the methods of totalitarian propaganda. It is worth noting that an analysis of film in history will inevitably merge into comparative study of mass media. The Russianists here at the university have already started this by their examination of revolutionary posters. Eisenstein's POTEMKIN gains extra dimension from this perspective ...

H. R. KEDWARD

Editor's Note: Mr. Kedward would like us to point out that the above is to be understood as an introduction only. It formed the basis of the first lecture in the course POLITICS, ICONOGRAPHY and FILM currently organized at the University of Sussex. The lecture was illustrated by slides and extracts.